Perception and Action

An Analogical Approach

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-, so müssen wir selbst völlig neu anfangen. Das geschieht, wie bei allen prinzipiell neuartigen Aufgaben, bei welchen nicht einmal eine Analogie leiten kann, in einer gewissen unvermeidlichen Naivität. Am Anfang ist die Tat.

- Edmund Husserl

The revolution that began with Kant's arguments about perceptual experiences should be carried through to agency.

- Susan Hurley

The best we can achieve is always to some extent provisional and inconclusive, but that is no reason to succumb to the fantasy of an external validation.

- John McDowell

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An Analogical Approach

LIST OF ABBREVATIONS

MW	McDowell, J. (1994), *Mind and World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).
PP	Merleau-Ponty, M. (1945), *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Gallimard).
SC	Merleau-Ponty, M. (1942), La structure du comportement (Paris : Quadrige/Presses Universitaire de France).

INTRODUCTION

I.I The Basic Thought

We regard perception as a way of being in touch with the world. Through perception we are put in contact with how things are in the world and it is through perception that the world can show us to be mistaken. I thought I had closed the window but now I see I was wrong. We also regard ourselves as agents in the world. Not only is the world present to us in perception but we are also present in the world as agents. Through intentional bodily actions we change how things are and it is through bodily actions that we can make changes for what we consider to be the better. I close the window because I consider it better that way. When I close the window this is a way of being in touch with the world. I act on how the world appears to me in perception and it is in the world I perceive that my acting makes a difference.

I take the dual thought, that perception is where the world reveals itself to us and that action is where we reveal our intentions to the world, to be fundamental for our self-conception. Perception must provide us with an openness to the world if we are to think of ourselves as thinkers with thoughts that can be rationally answerable to how things are in the world. Bodily action must be a way for us to act out our thoughts if we are to think of ourselves as agents who can be rationally and not merely causally responsible for certain happenings in the world. Such requirements appear to me to be at least constraints on the idea of what we, with John McDowell, can call ‘subjectivity as a mode of being in the world’, if not constraints on the notion of subjectivity as such (McDowell 1998a, p. 242).

What I shall be investigating in this thesis are certain ways of conceiving of our perceptual sensitivity and of our motor abilities that makes it hard to consider ourselves as rational animals that can have beliefs about the world and intend to make changes in how things are in the world. In doing so I shall be developing some ideas put forward by McDowell about how to connect certain intellectual threats to our conception of ourselves as perceivers with certain threats to our conception of ourselves as bodily agents. My emphasis will be on bodily agency and I will mainly discuss perceptual intentionality in order to shed light on the problem of agency.

The first part of the thesis is dedicated to the working out of analogies between the problem of perception and the problem of bodily agency. I shall propose that we take a conceptualist and relational view on bodily agency in analogy to

McDowell's view on perception. The proposals I make are presented against the background of a critique of assumptions that I argue tend to undermine the very idea of bodily agency. The second part is dedicated to a discussion of challenges to the conceptualist and relational account of bodily agency presented in the first part. The objections that I confront primarily target the conceptual aspect of the proposal I made in the first part. A number of contemporary authors have found ammunition for such an attack on McDowell's conceptualism in the works of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. I find the constellation McDowell–Merleau-Ponty challenging for a number of reasons and the objections I raise in the second part all, to a greater or lesser degree, have their origin in the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty.

I.II The Analogical Approach

I shall follow what Husserl called a *Methode der Analogie*, which proceeds by seeking out analogies between the practical sphere and the theoretical sphere of our lives (cf. Husserl 1988, 349). Husserl's motivation for his analogical method was the idea that the extensive work by him and others on the structures of theoretical intentionality could provide guidelines for the investigation of the practical sphere. This is in a certain sense also my motivation for proceeding via analogies. The amount of work on action theory since Husserl is, of course, huge and just the amount of work that has involved explicitly taking an analogical approach in one variant or another is massive.[1] What I do in this thesis is to take a specific account of perception as a starting point in order to examine how far we can stretch an analogical understanding of bodily agency. The conception of perception that I shall use as point of departure is a conceptualist and relational account, as developed in particular by McDowell. This choice is driven by a conviction that such an account of perception has a lot to be said for it. It is however a much debated and contested view on perception and my analogical procedure does not as such rely on an assumption of the truth of a conceptualist and relational account of perception. I shall to some extent argue for such an account of perception, but to a larger extent I shall explicate the background motivation for the account in order to investigate what a parallel conception of bodily agency could look like and to what extent such a view is defendable.

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[1] Some authors who explicitly take an analogical approach to action are: Danto 1973, Hornsby 1980, Searle 1983, Hurley 1998 and Enç 2003.

It might be possible that a fundamental divergence exists between the way we best understand theoretical rationality and the way we best understand practical rationality. Such a divergence could result in basic disanalogies between the way we can understand perception as a rational ground for our beliefs and the way we can understand intentional bodily actions as expressions of our agency.[2] As such an analogical approach does not rest on the idea of a necessary correspondence between what will be a correct conception of respectively perception and action. A careful search for analogies needs to be conducted with a keen eye for the potential disanalogies.

One advantage of an analogical approach is that the juxtaposition of problems in the area of perception with problems in the area of action can provide mutual clarification. In so far as certain diagnoses of problems in theories of perception are illuminating, the demonstration of corresponding problems in theories of action opens up an application of solutions familiar in the area of perception to problems concerning action. As Jennifer Hornsby states, the possibility of showing a one-to-one correspondence between philosophical confusions about perception with confusions concerning action may lend support to the given account of action in so far as it is clearer that these are confusions in the case of perception (Hornsby 1980, p. 111). Ideally such a clarification of confusions concerning agency will cast renewed light back onto the phenomenon of perception. Hornsby's own preferred account of perception and action, as set out in her early book, *Actions* (1980), is in direct contradiction with the account I shall argue for. This goes to show that the possibility of drawing formal analogies does not amount to any mutual validation that is itself external to the content of the theories.

Even if the reader should from the outset disagree with the relational and conceptualist conception of perception that serves as my guideline, I would argue that the investigation could be of some clarificatory value. To work out an understanding of our bodily agency parallel to such an account of perception is also partly a way of working out the implications of that account of perception for our conception of agency. These implications may be useful to know whether one is in favour or in opposition to the conception of perception proposed by McDowell.

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[2] Susan Hurley has suggested the possibility of such a fundamental discontinuity between theoretical and practical rationality as it might be that it is only theoretical rationality that is dependent on language and consequently conceptual capacities (Hurley 2003).

To talk about perception and bodily action as analogical phenomena naturally raises the question of the relation between the two faculties. Are they merely contingently related, does one have priority over the other, or are they perhaps mutually dependent? As my main purpose is to clarify certain threats to our conception of rational bodily agency and to argue that a conceptual account stands a good chance of evading the pitfalls, I shall only briefly touch upon such matters here.

The possibility of establishing an understanding of bodily actions in analogy to perception does not necessarily establish any deeper mutual dependency between the two phenomena. The possibility of a powerless perceiver or a perceptually blind agent is not ruled out simply by confirming certain structural similarities. We can distinguish between two versions of the question concerning the possible dependency relations between sensibility and motility, one completely general version and one concerning the instantiation of the distinction in the case of rational animals.[3] The problem of agency that I shall be dealing with is a specific problem concerning rational animals in possession of language. By focusing on rational animals I do not want to deny that there are philosophical questions concerning agency of a broader scope. As Harry Frankfurt states, the generic difference between bodily movements whose guidance can be attributed to a whole creature and those which cannot applies even to spiders and so cannot be understood in terms that apply only to rational animals (Frankfurt 1978, p. 162). If we see a frog flicking out its tongue to catch a bug and soon after being knocked over by a strong wind, we have an illustration of the generic difference (cf. McGinn 1982, p. 84). By limiting my discussion to rational animals I am not suggesting that we can do without such a broad notion of agency.

In the case of rational animals one way to ask how sensibility and motility are linked is to ask how we should conceive of the relation between perception as the grounds for empirical knowledge and intentional bodily action as our way of executing our intentions directed at the outer world. Understood thus, McDowell argues that the link is stronger than the connection McGinn expresses when he exploits Kant's famous dictum and writes that 'action would be useless without perception, and knowledge would be pointless without action' (McGinn 1982, p. 82). McDowell's point is not just that we would lose all interest if we could only gain knowledge from a permanently

[3] For an extensive argument for an interdependence thesis not tied to rational animals, see O'Shaughnessy (1980, ch. 8.)

disengaged point of view, because we were without power to change anything in any event. His stronger claim is that we cannot even make intelligible what it would mean if a creature could ground its beliefs on a perceptual access to the world without possessing any rational control whatsoever over its bodily movements. McDowell sketches an argument against the intelligibility of such a possibility when discussing the thought experiment of a rational wolf (McDowell 1998f, p. 170). If we imagine that a wolf has by some unknown power been given language and rationality then we cannot restrict the extension of *logos* to the receptive part of the life of the wolf. We can pretend to imagine a rational wolf whose bodily agency is still completely in the hands of its pre-linguistic brute instincts. Such a rational wolf would experience its bodily movements as completely alienated from itself; they would appear as just another phenomenon in the world to conceptualize. The attempt of such a disintegration of the active and the passive bodily powers of a rational animal is however, according to McDowell, doomed to fail. He argues in line with Gareth Evans, that in order to be able to have perceptions of one's environment with a conceptual content one needs to be able to locate oneself in the same objective space as where the perceived objects are located and that some ability to intentionally move around is a precondition for such self-location. His conclusion is the following:

> A possessor of *logos* cannot be just a knower, but must be an agent too; and we cannot make sense of *logos* as manifesting itself in agency without seeing it as selecting between options, rather than simply going along with what is going to happen anyway. (McDowell 1998f, p. 170)

If this conclusion is correct, it would not only mean that there could there be a specific transcendental problem about the possibility of bodily agency. It would mean that, just as a general threat to theoretical intentionality affects the possibility of intentional bodily actions, because intentions rely on the possibility of representational content, so a threat to the possibility of intentional bodily actions would affect the availability of the idea of theoretical intentionality. However, McDowell's conclusion is not evident to

me and I shall leave it an open question to what extend the two phenomena I investigate through their homological structures can be said to be mutually interdependent.[4]

I.III The Problem of Perception

In *Mind and World* (1994), McDowell diagnoses the basic problem concerning theoretical intentionality, which he addresses there, as transcendental in the sense that it is a problem of making the possibility of our thoughts' directedness towards the world intelligible. Intentionality is here understood as 'aboutness', and it is taken to be a fundamental feature of our thoughts in a broad sense. Empirical beliefs, whether true or false, display intentionality in the sense that they purport to be of the world. They aim at the world and may or may not hit their target. Hopes, fears, imaginings and memories are other examples of intentional phenomena and they would therefore belong to the broad notion of thoughts with which McDowell operates. Though they do not necessarily purport to be of an actual empirical reality, the content of such experiences is also the possible content of beliefs. I can believe that what I fear will actually happen. This general notion of intentional thoughts is comparable to Husserl's general notion of intentional experiences and I shall sometimes refer to them with the term intentional experiences. By doing so I wish to emphasize the idea that these phenomena are essentially tied to the perspective of a subject and can only be fully understood if we consider them through the meaning they have for the subject whose experiences they are.[5]

Amongst intentional phenomena we also find perceptual experiences. I can believe or disbelieve what I see, and perceiving itself is a way of being directed towards the world. The transcendental threat to our possibility of making sense of intentionality is a consequence of a threat to the conception of perception as intrinsically an intentional phenomenon. If we cannot make sense of perception as having an intentional content, it is not just our conception of perception but that of intentionality in general that is endangered, because perception is what ultimately grounds the possibility

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[4] Overgaard and Grünbaum argue, via Husserl, that perception of objects merely requires voluntary movements with a sense of agency and not full-blown intentional actions, whereas intentional actions are constitutively dependent on perception (2006, p. 29).

[5] I shall not enter the growing discussion on the relation between Husserl's and McDowell's conception of intentionality, but simply appropriate Husserl's terminology in order to emphasize the experiential aspect of intentional phenomena in addition to the conceptual aspect underlined by McDowell's talk of thoughts. See Christensen's *Self and World – from Analytic Philosophy to Phenomenology* for an extended discussion of the relationship (*forthcoming* October 2008, Walter de Gruyter).

of seeing our thoughts as directed towards the world. The claim is that perception is not just one amongst other kinds of intentional phenomenon, but is of an original kind in two senses of the word. It is original in the sense that *qua* intentional experience it is *sui generis* and so cannot be understood in terms of other more basic kinds of intentional phenomena. Furthermore the claim is that it is the origin of all empirical intentionality in the sense that it founds all other modes of thoughts with empirical content. In other words, perceptual intentionality is a necessary and irreducible condition for the intentionality of empirical thought. Remove perceptual intentionality and you lose all grip on the notion of our thoughts as being about the world. It is this fundamental role of perception that, according to McDowell, is undermined when we assume a certain notion of what it means that something is natural, namely a conception shaped in the image of modern natural science. Such, often unintended, consequences can show up because we also want to maintain that perception is a natural phenomenon. We share perceptual sensitivity with other animals, so to make the case that our perceptual sensitivity nevertheless is not part of nature would require quite some argument, and I would still find it hard not to regard such a conclusion as a sign of faulty premises.

McDowell identifies two fundamental features of perception which are endangered by the scientific objectification and which we need to re-establish if we are to counter the threat to intentionality. First, we need to recognize that the content of perception is conceptual through and through i.e., that the representational content of perception is of a kind that constitutively depend on the possession of conceptual capacities. Second, we need to appreciate the relational nature of perceptual experiences and so the dependence of the experience on the existence of an appropriate mind-independent object. McDowell's arguments to the effect that we can and should assume these two theses do not separate neatly into two independent lines, though his argumentation often proceeds with an emphasis on either one or the other aspect. In fact we do find philosophers who claim one but deny the other of the two theses. John Searle, for instance, argues for a conceptual and representational account of human perception, but takes the perceptual experience to be independent of the existence of any object seen. John Campbell, in contrast, proposes a relational account of perception but insists that the original perceptual relation to an object does not involve conceptual capacities. McDowell argues that we need both.

In *Mind and World*, McDowell puts emphasis on the conceptual nature of perception by pursuing the following line of thought. If we are to consider our thoughts

as thoughts that can be about the world they must be able to be, to a minimal degree, sensitive to how things are in the world. This sensitivity cannot consist in a merely causal influence if it is to be a relation to the world that can serve to justify our beliefs. The relation needs to be normative if it is to be possible for it to establish the correctness or incorrectness of our beliefs. Furthermore, for the normative relation to be rational it needs to be recognizable for the subject as a rational constraint stemming from the world itself. The demand that such recognition must be possible from the subject's perspective is an expression of what McDowell considers an essential link between rationality and freedom. If something is to serve as a reason for a belief it must be possible for the subject to freely stand back from the putative reason in order to critically assess its rationality. For our perceptual intake to be recognizable from the subject's point of view as something that can serve to justify her beliefs, the intake must be something that has the same kind of content as our beliefs, i.e., conceptual content. This is the line of thought which is to establish the need for a philosophical account of perception to recognize the conceptual nature of the content of perception.

The relational aspect of perception is also implied, however, by the arguments set out in *Mind and World*. It is not enough that our perception is ascribed conceptual content if we conceive of that content as only externally related to the world through a contingent causal influence. Such an account would not make it intelligible how our thoughts can stand in a rational relation to the world itself. This means that when we have a veridical experience we need to see this experience as a direct taking in of what is the case in the world. It is this direct realism which is emphasized in McDowell's papers on scepticism, where he proposes his disjunctive analysis of perceptual appearances.[6] The emphasis on the two different aspects in different works is a consequence of these works targeting two connected but distinguishable obstacles to a view of perception as our basic openness to the world.

The hindrance faced in *Mind and World* is the apparent incompatibility between the normative and rational function of perception and the need to view our perceptual sensitivity to the world as a natural phenomenon. The problem is how to regard perception as both *concept-involving* and *natural*. The specific obstacle which is

[6] Putnam criticises McDowell for presupposing disjunctivism and direct realism in *Mind and World* (Putnam 2002, p. 177). I think that McDowell is right that this is not the case (cf. McDowell 2002, pp. 291-292).

to be removed by the introduction of a disjunctive and relational view of perception stems from arguments for indirect realism based on the possibility of perceptual error. The problem here is how to regard perception as both *subjective* and *world-involving*. I will focus on the argumentation of *Mind and World* in the first chapter of this thesis, and on the specific arguments for a relational so-called disjunctivism of perception in the second chapter. I shall by no means present an adequate discussion of all the aspects of either McDowell's arguments or of the counter-arguments found in the literature. My aim is to lay bare the basic structures of McDowell's arguments in order to exploit these in my exposition of the problem of agency.

I should note that on the notion of concepts, I shall follow McDowell and take concepts to consist in conceptual capacities that can be employed in judgements with propositional content. This makes conceptual content essentially tied to language and also inherently inter-subjective as I take the idea of a private language to be unintelligible. This means that I assume what Bermúdez calls the Priority Principle, which states that there exists a constitutive relation between linguistic and conceptual abilities (Bermúdez 1998a, p. 42). The term 'concept' can, of course, be used in many ways. By tying the notion closely to language it becomes a means to articulate the idea that with language the possibility of taking a reason as a reason and of stepping back and assessing the rational credentials of a putative reason enters the picture. The possession of conceptual capacities is on this conception indissolubly tied to rationality understood as a capacity to ask for and to provide reasons for beliefs and actions. Furthermore this demanding sense of concepts is the contrast notion used when critics of conceptualism claim the need for a notion of non-conceptual content.

In his most recent writings, however, McDowell has changed his view on how we are to understand the idea that the content of perception is through and through conceptual (McDowell 2008a). McDowell no longer thinks that the content of perception is propositional but he insists on the fact that it is conceptual. This development complicates McDowell's notion of conceptual content. In the beginning of the second part of this thesis, I shall explicate the changes in McDowell's view and argue that his new conception of perceptual content is superior to the old view. McDowell's reassessment of the idea that conceptual content must be conceptual was published just as I was finishing this thesis. Consequently, I decided to leave more or less unchanged what I had already written on the basis of McDowell's conceptualism in its old version. As I think the changes are highly relevant for the theme of my thesis, I

decided to place a discussion of what I term McDowell's Embodied Conceptualism in the context of the challenges to conceptualism coming from a Merleau-Pontian perspective on perception and motility. Embodied Conceptualism can, I argue, be seen as a rapprochement to a Merleau-Pontian view on perception.

I.IV The Problem of Agency

I shall argue that there is a problem analogous to the transcendental problem concerning perception with regard to bodily agency, and that the problem is one that specifically concerns practical intentionality as distinct from theoretical intentionality. I shall only specify which kind of intentionality is in question when I talk about practical intentionality and keep the term intentionality for the feature of 'aboutness', i.e., the possession of representational content of an experience. The transcendental problem concerning bodily agency would be a sub-branch of the problem of theoretical intentionality if it were simply a consequence of the general threat to empirical content of intentional experiences. My claim is that, even if the way has been cleared for a view on perception as our basic openness to the world, we could still encounter the obstacles to a satisfying view on bodily agency with which I shall be dealing. I shall follow McDowell's diagnosis of the basic problem of agency as a problem of conceiving our bodily activity as itself imbued with intentionality (MW, p. 90).[7] This problem will not be solved just by paving the way for conception of perception as imbued with conceptual intentionality. The problem of bodily agency is the problem of seeing how the agent herself can be essentially involved in the bodily movements through which her intentional bodily actions are carried out. To keep the agent in view becomes difficult because it seems only reasonable to regard the bodily capacity to move, our motility, as a natural phenomenon. After all we share the potential for self-movement with other biological creatures.

With a commitment to the naturalness of our bodily motility and a due respect for natural science, we can seem forced to picture the agent as only externally related to her bodily movements. The bodily movements are conceived of as a purely physical phenomenon and they are as such of fundamentally the same kind, whether

[7] As such the problem of linguistic meaning is a specific and especially intriguing version of the general problem of bodily agency. We can see the problem of linguistic meaning as the problem of making it intelligible that linguistic behaviour can be 'intrinsically imbued with content' (McDowell 1987, p. 74).

they are a way for the subject to carry out her intentions or whether they happen because some neuroscientist stimulates our motor cortex. I shall argue that we have good reason to fear that if our intentions can only be externally related to our bodily movements, we will never come to understand how an agent's intentions can rationally guide what she actually does in the world. The problem is analogous to the problem of how we are to conceive of the world as having a rational constraint on our thoughts if the world is merely causally related to our perceptual experiences. My proposal is that we can avoid the predicament if we can make sense of the following two ideas: First, the idea of a kind of bodily movements that are essentially agency-loaded, and second, the idea of intentions or 'tryings' that are essentially embodied in movements. In short, the proposal is: Our intentions are not internal to our mind and our body is not external to our intentions.

My proposal with regard to bodily agency is analogous to McDowell's proposals concerning perception. McDowell urges us to regard perception as an essentially world-involving experience and to regard the world itself as conceptually structured. We need to understand perception as not falling short of the worldly facts and we need to understand our perception as having conceptual content, this means that we come to conceive of the factual world as itself conceptually structured. Similarly I propose that we conceive of our intentions or tryings as not falling short of worldly acts and of our agency-expressive bodily movements as themselves essentially involving our practical yet conceptual abilities. What I argue is that there is a necessary link between our concept of intentions and our concept of bodily capacities which makes it urgent that we picture our bodily motility as itself imbued with conceptual intentionality. This claim is the analogue of McDowell's claim of a necessary link between empirical beliefs and perception which makes it imperative that we regard perception itself as infused with conceptual content.

McDowell appears to oscillate between two ways of understanding the status of his proposals. Sometimes he underlines that demonstrating the mere intelligibility of his proposals is enough for them to do their work (cf. McDowell 1998i, p. 428, n. 14). It is sufficient for his purposes if we can come to realize that the alternative accounts he proposes can make sense of the phenomenon in question. The mere availability of an intelligible alternative, combined with a perspicuous analysis of the original problem, should be enough to extinguish the philosophical urge to raise certain philosophical question, like, for instance, the transcendental question about how

intentionality is at all possible. However, in other places he makes the stronger claim that his proposals represent the only conceivable way of making sense of the phenomenon in question, whether it be empirical knowledge or empirical intentionality as such. Such claims are often found in the context of what I call negative transcendental arguments. Such negative arguments are arguments to the effect that certain assumptions will eventually make the phenomenon we set out to explain unintelligible (cf. McDowell 2006b, p. 23).

My arguments have both a negative and a positive side. On the negative side, I shall argue that there are certain assumptions concerning the nature of bodily movements and the nature of mental items like intentions which together make it very difficult if not impossible to make sense of our capacity for intentional bodily actions. In doing so I shall try to identify certain basic assumptions shared by a host of different theories. By no means do I purport to carry through an exhaustive critique of all the different theories on the market that could appear to be committed to the assumptions I identify as problematic. For this reason, I shall restrict the negative side of my claim to the claim that we have good reason to suspect that theories that share the basic assumptions I criticise will run into the problems I expose. On the positive side, I claim that the alternative I propose can avoid the problems I have diagnosed as the outcome of the basic assumptions identified in the negative part of my argument. Again I do not claim that I have given an exhaustive critique of all thinkable alternatives and I do not claim that the proposals I make are the only intelligible way to make sense of our bodily agency. My purpose here is merely to establish the intelligibility of the conceptual account and to demonstrate its robustness when faced with a certain genre of objections which are more or less inspired by Merleau-Ponty. What I shall argue is that a sensible way to avoid making bodily agency a mystery is to assume what I will call a dual conception of bodily movements, as well as a conceptualist disjunctivism of trying or willing.

Let me sum up the three basic claims that I aim to establish as at least plausible basic elements in an adequate understanding of the bodily agency of rational animals:

Thesis (A): A dual conception of bodily movements

In order to understand intentional bodily actions as a *sui generis* phenomenon in relation to a natural scientific explanation we need to conceive of the bodily movements

essential for the carrying out of such actions as of *sui generis* kind in relation to the kind of bodily movements that are explainable by natural science. This is not just an anomalous monism of bodily movements. The claim is not just that the same event of bodily movements can be given two mutually irreducible descriptions. The claim is that there are two fundamental ways of conceiving of bodily movements corresponding to two fundamentally different subject matters. The dual conception of movements claims that there are two different kinds of bodily movements; movements that are understood by being placed in the 'space of reasons', and movements that can be understood by natural scientific means.[8]

Thesis (B): A Disjunctivism of Trying

The experiential aspect of an intentional bodily action I shall refer to as a 'trying'. Trying-disjunctivism says that even if we can imagine a case of total failure in which we have an experience indistinguishable from the experience we have when we actually carry out an intentional bodily action, the trying-experience of our normal bodily actions can and must be considered as of a fundamentally different kind than such completely ineffective tryings. A trying is *either* an idle trying *or* it is a trying of a kind that essentially involves bodily activity.[9]

Thesis (C): Embodied Conceptualism

In the case of rational animals, intentional bodily actions are realizations of practical concepts, or what I shall refer to as actualizations of practical, conceptual capacities. The intentionality with which bodily movements are imbued is the intentionality of the trying experience and the trying has conceptual content. The trying is the actualization of a teleologically basic, practical concept.

These are the three main positive theses of this thesis. I spend some time explaining the Thesis of Conceptualism by the end of *Chapter One*. In *Chapter 3* I try to spell out the negative consequences of separating intentions and bodily movements as two autonomous elements of bodily actions. Furthermore I introduce a Dual Conception of

[8] Hornsby has developed the most explicit version of a kind of dual conception of movements that I know of, though she terms it a disjunctivism of movements (Hornsby 1997, p. 102).

[9] To my knowledge, such a disjunctivism of trying was first explicitly formulated by Dokic (1992), though earlier versions of the basic idea are discussed by McGinn (1982) and A. D. Smith (1988).

Movements and a Disjunctivism of Trying and argue that, in combination, they provide the means for evading the problems of the standard conceptions. The conceptualist account of our agency can seem to imply a denial of the agency of other non-rational animals as well as human infants. I devote *Chapter 4* to arguing that such an implausible and intolerable conclusion does not follow from a conceptualist account of rational agency. In *Part Two* I focus on a host of objections inspired by Merleau-Ponty's work. The target of these objections is primarily the conceptualist aspect of the account I developed in *Part One*.

If successful, the attempt to release the specific intellectual tension between our conception of ourselves as both responsive to reason and as natural creatures will not result in an exorcising of all philosophical questions concerning freedom. To think so would be, to paraphrase Husserl, to retire to the asylum of philosophical ignorance.[10] That such a specific exercise of philosophical therapy does not deal with all philosophical questions concerning human freedom is explicitly recognized by McDowell when he writes as follows:

> Of course what rationality confers is only the *capacity* to live a life that is one's own in the sense I am gesturing at. To what extent the capacity is exercised, and in which regions of life, depends on all kinds of factors. The conditions under which the potential for freedom can be realized are an important topic for philosophy. (McDowell 2006c, p. 8).

Here McDowell refers to issues that are not addressed when we are exclusively dealing with transcendental threats to the very idea of a potential for freedom. Besides from such issues there might to be other ways of thinking than the ones I shall be focusing on, that potentially poses a threat to our conception of ourselves as bodily agents.

I.V Practical Knowledge and Intentional Bodily Action

It is now time to say something about what I mean by an intentional bodily action. By such actions I shall understand actions that both essentially involve active or voluntary bodily movements and are intentional in the sense Anscombe circumscribed. Anscombe's broad definition of practical intentionality says that actions are intentional

[10] Husserl's talk of an 'asylum for phenomenological ignorance' appears in a somewhat different context (cf. Overgaard and Grünbaum 2007, p. 16, n.7)

when a specific version of the 'Why?' question finds application, namely the version where what one asks for are reasons for acting as opposed to merely asking for the cause of an event (Anscombe 1957/2000, p. 24).

It is characteristic of such 'Why?' questions that when they find application the agent will immediately recognize the action put into question as her action. This comes out if we follow Anscombe and consider one of the ways the applicability of the question can be denied. Saying, 'I didn't know I was cutting down the tree with the robin's nest', when asked why I did so is a way of refusing the applicability of the specific 'Why?' question that aims for a response in terms of reasons. In such a situation, presumably, I would be intentionally cutting down the tree and the action of cutting down the tree with the robin's nest would not be some further action but simply the same action under a different description. This goes to show that, as Anscombe professed, actions are always intentional under a certain description.

As I shall use the term 'intentional action', it implies that the agent is aware of what she is doing under some description and that this awareness is in a certain sense non-observational. I shall say that the agent has some basic *practical* and *non-observational* knowledge of what she is doing when what she does is done intentionally. It is not everything that one does intentionally that one knows one is doing while doing it. To use Davidson's example: If I am filling in a form with the intention of producing ten carbon copies, then I will know that that is my intention, but I can only know after the fact whether I succeeded in fulfilling my intention (Davidson 1980c, p. 50). The point of saying that an intentional agent always has some basic practical knowledge is that if she performs an intentional action there is some description under which she has knowledge of what she is doing. In the case of the carbon-copy making, the agent will normally know that she is writing and she will know this without having to check in the way she needs to check whether she managed to make all ten copies.

It could be claimed that, by focusing on the category of intentional actions defined as those of which the agent has practical knowledge, we limit the scope of the action-category in an unjustifiable, aprioristic manner. Instead we ought to leave it open for empirical research to narrow down the exact extension of what we should call an action. Arthur Danto has pushed such an idea against what he calls the 'physiological recklessness' of modern philosophy of action (Danto 1979, p. 474). Danto refers to Hefferline's experiments that show that when a person is subjected to unpleasant sounds and her finger twitches are simultaneously registered and made to causally influence the

sounds, the subject will start twitching her fingers in a way that lowers the sounds. The twitching is not consciously registered by the subject, however, and so does not count as intentional action. The subject can only discover her behaviour by observing herself and she cannot intentionally reproduce the movements. Nevertheless the movements instantiate goal-directed behaviour and one could argue that an interest in bodily agency should therefore not confine itself to intentional actions in the strong sense.

By focusing on intentional bodily action I do not want to deny that there are interesting empirical and philosophical questions related to a weaker notion of bodily agency. I do, however, want to claim that the features of intentional bodily actions are *sui generis* in relation to the unconscious goal-directed behaviour of the subject in the experiments to which Danto refers. If we want to understand the possibility of at least some of our actions displaying the kind of first- person practical knowledge characterized above we will never reach our goal if we start out with unconscious behaviour. My interest is in the question of exactly how we can make sense of the bodily agency of rational agents who can act for reasons *qua* reasons. To be able to let one's action be rationally guided by what one takes to be good reasons, one needs to know what one is doing while one is doing it. This does not mean that there are not interesting questions about cases where it is unclear what the agent is conscious of, and I shall raise some of these questions in the course of the thesis. The paradigmatic case of an intentional bodily action is, however, a case where there is no doubt that the agent has practical knowledge of her own action. I assume that such actions exist and that it is crucial for all theories with a scope that includes the agency of mature human beings that they can account for such cases.

Finally, a note on my focus on intentional bodily actions that involve bodily movements. Such a focus, it could be argued, puts an unjustifiable limit on what we understand by actions that are both intentional and bodily. If I stand still this can be an intentional action and it is certainly an action that is necessarily bodily and the same could be said about me standing still while patiently holding up a tilting snowman. Furthermore I can intentionally do something by refraining from doing something else. I can insult someone by not showing up at a party, and I can let the snowman fall to the ground by not intervening when it begins to lose its balance. I think we can easily see that in such cases of immobile doings or of intentional omission we can only make sense of these actions as intentional with the background of an understanding of the agent's capacity to perform intentional bodily actions in the strong sense I am using for

the purposes of this discussion. This I think suffices to justify my focus on such bodily actions.[11]

I.VI The Challenge of Merleau-Ponty

In the second part of the thesis I will discuss a certain kind of objection to the conceptualist picture I presented in the first part. The basic structure of the objections is to agree with the thesis that intentional bodily action involves movements that are intrinsically agency-loaded but to deny that this means that we need to regard such voluntary bodily activity as permeated with practical, conceptual capacities. On the contrary, the objections run, we need to recognize a fundamental type of practical, motor intentionality that is non- or pre-conceptual if we are to make bodily agency intelligible. The objections I introduce will mainly be objections inspired by the early works of Merleau-Ponty.

It is not my purpose to present a comprehensive interpretation of the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, and not just because I shall limit the sources I draw on to his early works. [12] Merleau-Ponty offers a detailed investigation of what he terms 'motor intentionality'. Motor intentionality is, according to Merleau-Ponty, a specifically practical mode of intentionality on a par with the specifically perceptual mode of directedness towards the world, neither of which is *representational*. Merleau-Ponty suggests that both of these modes of intentionality are original in the two senses mentioned above; in the sense of being *sui generis* intentional experiences and in the sense of being foundational for all other kinds of intentional experiences. It is this specific notion of motor intentionality, combined with Merleau-Ponty's extensive use of analogies between perception and action, that are my particular reasons for turning to his work.

Merleau-Ponty's notion of motor intentionality is just like the notion of practical intentionality I argue for a notion that is inherently tied to bodily movements. This means that Merleau-Ponty's account will not necessarily inherit the problems I diagnose as stemming from an agency-neutral conception of bodily movement.

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[11] I leave so-called mental actions to one side and so also the question of the relation between mental and bodily actions.

[12] I shall first and foremost be drawing on Merleau-Ponty's work from before his appointment as Professor of Philosophy at the College de France in 1952, primarily *La structure du comportement* (1942) and *Phénoménologie de la perception* (1945).

Nevertheless Merleau-Ponty's notion of motor intentionality does not seem compatible with the conceptual aspect of the account I present. That Merleau-Ponty's analysis of both perception and bodily agency is in conflict with McDowell's conceptualism and that this indicates the shortcomings of the conceptual account has been argued by a number of authors. In particular, the recent debate between McDowell and Dreyfus has developed into an indirect discussion on the merits of Merleau-Ponty's account. In my discussion of the potential impact that insights found in Merleau-Ponty's work can have on a conceptualist account of perception and bodily agency, I shall begin by attending to the relation between the recent changes in McDowell's position and Merleau-Ponty's conception of perception and then turn to the issue of agency. My main argument will be to the effect that, though drawing on resources from Merleau-Ponty can help clarify and nuance the conceptualist position, it does not, at least so far, bring in new arguments that have the force to shake the basic assumptions of conceptualism. The conclusion that conceptual capacities must be inextricably implicated in both perceptual experience and bodily agency if we are to make the possibility of rational animals intelligible still stands.

Apart from the specific interest of Merleau-Ponty's notion of motor intentionality, for the main theme of this thesis I regard Merleau-Ponty's work as highly relevant for a general discussion of McDowell's philosophy. The relevance is due to the large extent of overlap between their respective analyses of the basic problems of modern philosophy, combined with their apparently divergent positive suggestions.

In *Phénoménologie de la perception* (1945), Merleau-Ponty displays a dialectic oscillation between what he calls Empiricism and Intellectualism as the symptoms of an adherence to the framework of Objective Thought. The fundamental mistake of Intellectualism is that it takes as given the determinate universe of science and therefore can only establish a temporary bulwark against the naturalization of subjectivity (PP, p. 58). The available alternative within the framework of Objective Thought, Empiricism, fares no better when it tries to explain the intentionality of perception as a result of merely causal relation between items that are in themselves meaningless.

In *Mind and World*, McDowell sets out the consequences of assuming scientific realism as a dilemma between what he terms the Myth of the Given and Coherentism. The apparently forced choice between the two positions corresponds on many points to Merleau-Ponty's dialectic between Empiricism and Intellectualism.

There are differences, however, and it is these differences that make the constellation of the two thinkers interesting and which have the potential to allow for a clarification of the phenomena in question through mutual critique.

From a McDowellian perspective, the critical question is whether Merleau-Ponty, in spite of his resistance, succumbs to a version of the Myth of the Given, which eventually will make the relation between perception and judgments unintelligible. Turning the table, the immediate critical question to McDowell from a Merleau-Pontian perspective would be whether McDowell does not, in spite of all his assurances, fall into the trap of Intellectualism, when he insists that the content of perception must be conceptual – an intellectualism that because of its preoccupation with thinking constructs a picture of perceptions that falsifies the specific phenomenology of perception.

I shall not pursue a full-scale investigation of such mutual critical questions, but they will rise to the surface from time to time as I go along. My main focus and reason for turning to Merleau-Ponty remains my desire to investigate to what extent the conceptualist account I develop can accommodate the critical points coming from a perspective that shares McDowell's rejection of science as the measure of all things as well as his emphasis on the need to regard some bodily movements as themselves imbued with intentionality.

I shall now turn to an exposition of McDowell's analysis of the problem of perception as it is found in *Mind and World* and from there begin my development of an analogical account of the problem of bodily agency.

PART ONE
AN EMBODIED CONCEPTUALISM CONCERNING BODILY AGENCY

Für die frage nach ihren Warum dem "ich sehe es" keinen Wert beimessen , wäre Widersinn – wie wir abermals einsehen.

- Edmund Husserl

CHAPTER 1
THE PROBLEM OF PERCEPTION AND THE PROBLEM OF AGENCY

1.1 The Transcendental Problem of Perception

1.1.1 The Diagnostic Spirit of Mind and World

In John McDowell's *Mind and World* (1994), we find a way of expressing the general problem of agency which will serve as my point of departure. McDowell presents the problem via a formulation that transposes Kant's famous dictum from the area of empirical intuitions to the area of bodily agency:

> Kant says, 'Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind'. Similarly, intentions without overt activity are idle, and movements of limbs without concepts are mere happenings not expressions of agency. (MW, p. 89).

Here McDowell connects the problem of agency with the central issue of *Mind and World*, namely, how we must conceive of perception if empirical content is to be possible. In this chapter I shall be dealing primarily with McDowell's analysis of the problem of perception in order to be able to exploit my presentation of the analysis in my proposals concerning agency in the coming chapters.

Mind and World takes issue with a specific threat to the intelligibility of intentionality, i.e., to the possibility of our thoughts to be about the world. The main purpose of *Mind and World* is to clarify the nature of this threat to the very idea of intentionality, to understand the genesis of the problem and to show how its origin shapes certain philosophical responses to the threat, which will remain ineffective exactly because they do not question the origin. As such, the book urges a diagnostic and therapeutic approach to the problem of intentionality.

McDowell's overall diagnosis is that a certain conception of nature creates the intellectual threat to our notion of intentionality, namely, nature conceived as that which can be understood by modern natural science. It is when this assumption is in place that it can come to seem that the intentionality of our thoughts is highly problematic. The therapeutic element in McDowell's approach has two steps. The first step consists in making the problem clear, and the second consists in clearing the way to seeing that certain assumptions which are essential for the emergence of the problem are, in spite of their appearance, not obligatory.

Central to the first element of the therapeutic process is the realization that the threat which arises is of a transcendental nature, in the sense that it is a threat to the possibility of making intentionality intelligible at all. One way of giving expression to the threat is the Kantian formulation: How is empirical content possible at all (MW, p. xxi)? Recognizing the transcendental nature of the problem is paramount to being able to deal with it. The problem is not primarily an epistemological problem about the possibility of knowledge about the world. Such a purely epistemological interpretation of the problem would not address the fact that it is the very possibility of making sense of our thoughts as possible cases of knowledge, i.e., as purporting to be of the world, which is in question. The deadlock which creates the impression that intentionality is ruled out is the result of two basic assumptions that both seem equally credible (cf. McDowell 2000, p. 6). One is the idea that in order for our thoughts to have empirical content they must be able to be confronted with how the world is, and that such a confrontation in our case can only happen in perception. The other is the idea that perceptual impressions are natural phenomena and so cannot be said to show us how we ought to think, as natural phenomena just happen and cannot be intrinsically normative. This is a short-hand version of the origin of the apparent impasse which I shall expand below.

Once the problem is seen clearly, the second step of McDowell's therapeutic approach consists in an attempt to show that the conception of nature that drives the second assumption is not compulsory. This is combined with an analysis of what, in McDowell's picture, are symptoms of the intellectual predicament which results from the non-compulsory assumption. The analysis is to reveal our predicament as one of being caught up in a restless oscillation between two equally unstable philosophical positions, namely Coherentism and a position that assumes what Wilfred Sellars called the Myth of the Given. These philosophical positions can be seen as attempts to give a straight answer to the transcendental question while the aim of McDowell's approach is to show that the transcendental question arises because of assumptions that inevitably will make empirical content aporetic:

> The deeper misconception is to mistake an impossible conceptual bind for a tractable intellectual problem – something one might set out to solve without shifting one's background assumptions. (McDowell 2000, p. 5).

The purpose of this therapeutic approach is to make readers in the grip of the transcendental question realize that the problem owes its compelling nature to certain assumptions and that we can see our way to ridding ourselves of the assumptions and thereby exorcise the philosophical impulse to raise the question. 'The result will be, not an answer to the question, but a liberation from the apparent need to ask it' (McDowell 2000, p. 5). The approach aims at a perspicuous deconstruction of the building blocks that went into making the question appear intellectually pressing; a deconstruction that is to make us realize that we are entitled to reclaim the phenomenon in question as philosophically unproblematic.

Mind and World is focused on showing that there is nothing to hinder us from regarding our perception as presenting us directly with facts of the world and at the same time as a natural phenomenon. The point of McDowell's short digression into the field of action is to emphasize that the problem he deals with is not limited to theoretical intentionality (MW, pp. 89-91). That the conception of nature McDowell works to dislodge from our thinking has disturbing repercussions when it comes to our understanding of ourselves as bodily agents is not simply a consequence of the fact that intentionality understood as 'aboutness' is essential for understanding intentional actions in general. Naturally, if we cannot make sense of intentionality in general we will also be unable to understand how intentions to perform actions can have any content. The problem of agency to which McDowell draws attention is however specifically agency-related. It is a problem that concerns our presumably natural ability to move our body that is essential for our ability to perform intentional bodily actions. Just as the assumption that perception is a natural phenomenon can seem to exclude the possibility of our perceptual experiences providing a rational constraint on our beliefs, so the fact that our bodily capacity to move is a natural phenomenon can seem to remove this capacity from our possession as rational agents. It is both our passive and our active bodily powers as rational animals that can gain the appearance of unthinkable phenomena when a certain naturalistic perspective is dominant (cf. MW, p. 111). In order to be able to clarify the nature of the threat to our conception of ourselves as bodily agents I will first spell out how the idea of theoretical intentionality can come to appear as deeply problematic.

1.1.2 The Pentalemma of Mind and World

We can clarify the origin of the transcendental questioning of intentionality by displaying the background for the urgency of the question as a pentalemma. The pentalemma is constituted by five propositions which taken together are inconsistent, but any four of them on their own form a coherent set. By mapping out the problem in this way I will have an opportunity to show how the oscillation between Coherentism and the Myth of Given is initiated and how McDowell argues we can find a way out of the impasse. The pentalemma arises from the combination of the following five theses: [13]

> Thesis (1) Experiential Naturalism: Our perceptual experiences are natural occurrences.
>
> Thesis (2) *Sui generis* Conceptualism: What it is to possess and employ conceptual capacities cannot be captured in natural scientific terms.
>
> Thesis (3) Scientistic Naturalism: All natural occurrences can be explained in natural scientific terms.
>
> Thesis (4) Minimal Empiricism: Our perceptual experiences can justify our beliefs.
>
> Thesis (5) Epistemological Conceptualism: Only that which itself has conceptual content can justify a belief.

Taken together, the first three theses imply the assumption that procures the transcendental problem of intentionality. The crucial implication is that, given the three theses, it is ruled out that our perceptual experiences can, *qua* natural occurrences, be essentially concept-involving. It is this conclusion, in combination with Minimal Empiricism and Epistemological Conceptualism that engenders the outlook from which the very possibility of having thoughts that take aim at reality comes to seem endangered. The oscillation, which is the symptom of accepting the three first theses, now runs between denying either Minimal Empiricism, which is the move of Coherentism, or denying Epistemological Conceptualism, which is the evasion that leads to the Myth of the Given. McDowell's own proposal is that we can intervene before the conclusion that initiates the oscillation is reached. This intervention can take

[13] As will become clear later, the theses need amendments for them to come out as formally inconsistent, this is what the possibility of a consistent interpretation of the five theses within a Davidsonian anomalous monism shows (1.5. below).

place when we realize that we are not forced to adhere to Thesis 3, Scientistic Naturalism. If the possibility of this intervention is not acknowledged, the hopelessness of the dilemma between Coherentism and the Myth of the Given can, according to McDowell, easily provide an understandable motivation for a full-scale naturalization project that denies the *Sui generis* Conceptualism and announces the unboundedness of natural science. This is the option McDowell terms bald naturalism (MW, p. 73).

The only possible escape from the pentalemma which I have not yet mentioned consists in denying Thesis 1, Experiential Naturalism. This possibility is not explicitly discussed as an option by McDowell but it shows up in his defence of the possibility of denying Scientistic Naturalism. The difficulty of denying Scientistic Naturalism is to make it clear that it does not amount to a hidden denial of the naturalness of perception and so a denial of Thesis 1 (cf. MW, p. 77). As it stands, Thesis 1 simply states that perception is a natural phenomenon without specifying exactly what is to be understood by the term 'natural'. This is the broad sense of nature McDowell recommends and which is simply to be understood in its contrast with 'the supernatural – the spooky or the occult' (McDowell 2000, p. 99). What is supposedly ruled out by this assumption is that our perceptual experiences could be the result of super-natural forces in the sense of forces that are neither physical nor psychological, where these terms are still understood in a loose sense.[14] Furthermore a transcendental idealism that regards the subject's perception of the world as the limit of the world, and therefore as not taking place in the world, would contradict Experiential Naturalism. These options are not discussed by McDowell as Experiential Naturalism is the one premise all parties within the purview of McDowell's discussion would agree upon (cf. MW, p. 76).

In what follows I shall first focus on the three premises that lead to the conclusion that our perceptual experiences cannot, *qua* natural occurrences, essentially involve the employment of our conceptual capacities. I shall then proceed to an exposition of the oscillation generated by this conclusion.

1.1.3 The Logical Space of Reasons

[14] I borrow the term Experiential Naturalism from Martin (2004). Martin points out that the sense-data theories of Moore and Russell involve a denial of Experiential Naturalism since they consider the sense data to be awareness- independent entities which are neither physical nor mental (Martin 2004, p. 86, n. 8).

Thesis 2 states the *sui generis* nature of conceptual capacities. For McDowell this is equivalent to what he terms the *sui generis* nature of the logical space of reasons. This implication is however not a part of the thesis as it figures in the pentalemma. It is only the combination with Thesis 5, about the necessarily conceptual nature of all reasons that secures the congruence of the space of the conceptual with the space of reasons. To unpack Thesis 2 I will make a detour to discuss the notion of the logical space of reasons, and show why the logical space of reasons, according to McDowell, coincides with the logical space of the conceptual. This in turn will allow me to explain why such a congruence should be denied and how such a negation leads to the Myth of the Given.

The term 'logical space of reasons' is from Wilfred Sellars, who used it as a contrast to a logical space of empirical descriptions:

> The essential point is that in characterizing an episode or a state as that of knowing, we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says. (Sellars 1997, p. 76).

McDowell takes over the idea that placing an item in the space of reasons is to understand the item in question as something that potentially can be justified and potentially serve as a justification, but, contrary to Sellars, he takes the contrastive logical space to be what he calls the realm of law, in which items are understood by being subsumed under natural law. It is essential for McDowell that not only what is subject to natural-scientific intelligibility but also what is understood through its space-of-reason intelligibility are phenomena in the sense of states and occurrences that are part of the empirically knowable reality (McDowell 2004, p. 91; McDowell 2006, p. 235). Only thus does a possibility occur for taking space-of-reason intelligibility as a way of understanding phenomena as natural.

The contrast between the two logical spaces is a contrast between two modes of thought or two kinds of intelligibility (MW, pp. 70-73) and it has, as McDowell points out, certain affinities with the distinction between *Verstehen* and *Erklären* (McDowell 2004, p. 93). As the notion of the logical space of reasons is a contrastive notion, it is dependent on the availability of a notion of the contrastive logical space, i.e., the logical space of modern science. This, of course, cannot mean that before around the seventeenth century people had no sense of a distinction between an explanation that involves reasons and an explanation that merely involves

mechanical causes. It was exactly such a contrast that Socrates drew when he argued that the true cause of his sitting on the bench in the prison in Athens was his decision and not the fact that his body had certain physiological properties (Plato 1955, 99b):

> It would be true to say that if I did not possess things like that – bones and sinews and so on – I shouldn't be able to do what I had resolved upon; but to say that I do what I do because of them – and that too when I am acting with my mind – and not because of my choice of what is best, would be to use extremely careless language. (Plato 1955, 99b).

Furthermore it was the awareness of such a distinction that left Socrates so disappointed when he studied Anaxagoras' cosmology in his youth:

> I expected him to tell me in the first place whether the earth is flat or round, and then go on to explain the cause why it must be the one or the other, using the term "better", and showing how it was better for it to be as it is (Plato 1955, 97d).

I take McDowell's point to be that it is only with the modern mathematization of natural science that we achieved a way of understanding natural phenomena that became so comprehensive that it gradually made Socrates' search for a normative understanding of the shape of the Earth less and less relevant and by now makes it obviously non-scientific.[15] Modern natural science provides a way of understanding that excludes the possibility of asking scientific questions as to whether its subject matter is correct or incorrect. It is not a scientific question if one asks whether the firing of certain neurons is justified in the light of the brain activity in another area, and it would be beside the point of astronomy to ask whether an eclipse of the moon was correct or not, or to take it as a sign from the gods.

We can, of course, ask whether a prediction of an eclipse is itself justified, but then we are not questioning the subject matter of science but rather our beliefs about the subject matter. Such concepts as belief, knowledge and in fact all notions that ascribe propositional attitudes serve, according to McDowell, to place their subject matter in the space of reasons. To place an item in the space of reasons means

[15] McDowell notes that in the early stages of modern science one could only have an inchoate understanding of the *sui generis* character of the space of reasons, and that such an inchoate sense might be part of the motivation for Descartes' dualism (see MW, p. 90, McDowell 2004, p. 97).

understanding it in terms of normative relations, such as implication and probabilification, and so to understand the item as potentially reason-constituting (MW, pp. 7, 52). It is to understand the item as equipped to serve as a justification for a judgment or an action. If one proposition, say, that yesterday's weather forecast promised rain today, makes another proposition, say, that it will rain today, more probable, then my believing the first proposition can give me reason to believe that it will rain. Further, given that I do not want to become wet, my belief that it will rain can give me a reason to take an umbrella when I go out.

McDowell's claim that the space of reasons is *sui generis* relative to the realm of modern science is in the first instance a claim about the concepts that serve to place items in the space of reasons, concepts such as 'hope', 'belief' and 'prediction'. The claim is that such concepts that operate in the space of reasons have a specific intellectual role in making phenomena intelligible in a way that cannot be overtaken by concepts that serve to make phenomena intelligible in a natural scientific manner (cf. MW, p. 74). It is this claim that is denied by bald naturalism. McDowell makes a distinction between two ways the naturalization project of bald naturalism can be can be undertaken. It can either attempt to reconstruct the space-of-reason kind of intelligibility out of the natural scientific way of understanding or it can try to reduce the first kind of understanding to the latter.[16] McDowell does not claim to deliver any cogent arguments that show that all such naturalization projects are in principle impossible. His strategy is to undermine a certain philosophical motivation for thinking that we need to take such a project upon us, namely the motivation that stems from the appearance that such an approach is the only way to save our ability to think, act and perceive from becoming supernatural powers: 'I have no need to say anything against bald naturalism except that

[16] On one reading, Quine belongs to the camp of reductionists, though his position is notoriously ambiguous (cf. MW, p. 134, n. 5). Loar's functionalist theory of mind and Millikan's teleosemantics are two attempts at a reconstructive naturalism explicitly criticized by McDowell (McDowell 1998g, McDowell 2004, see also McDowell 2002a, p. 304, n. 25)). A third kind of naturalism is a 'sociological naturalism' which holds on to the *sui generis* of the space of reason relative to natural science but regards the norms of rationality as constituted by social institutions themselves understandable in terms of independent social facts. McDowell identifies Kripke's and Wright's readings of Wittgenstein's rule following considerations as such a sociological reductionism (MW, p. 92, n. 7). Bloor and Barnes' sociology of knowledge would be another case in point.

it does not relieve the philosophical difficulty I consider' (McDowell 1998i, p. 428, n. 13).[17]

In explaining why the space of reason is *sui generis*, McDowell refers to Davidson's idea that that intentional explanation cannot be reduced to nomological explanations (MW, p. 74). Davidson argues that by giving explanations in terms of reasons we regard the phenomena in question as governed by a 'constitutive ideal of rationality' (Davidson 1980c, p. 223). This means that we make things intelligible by revealing them as, at least approximately, being as they rationally ought to be (McDowell 1998a, p. 328). When someone packs an umbrella before going out, we can make this behavior intelligible as rational if we, for instance, know that the person expects it to rain. It is crucial that making the behavior intelligible in this way involves regarding the person herself as bringing her umbrella for this reason, which means seeing her as herself aspiring to live up to the norms of rationality. This means that the person herself would ordinarily know the reasons why she does what she does. If asked why she acted as she did, she would know her reason in the non-observational way paradigmatic for intentional action of rational animals. If we cut this tie between what the agent takes as her reason and what we, who understand her action as rational, take to be her reason, we also remove our understanding from the space of reasons and we are no longer trying to understand her action as intentional.

By the notion of conceptual capacities that I stipulated in the introduction above, such capacities are understood via their actualization in judgments, i.e., in the taking of a certain propositional stance. This makes it evident why the *sui generis* of the space of reasons implies the *sui generis* of conceptual capacities. If propositional attitudes are what they are in terms of the employment of conceptual capacities, and such attitudes can only be understood by being placed within the space of reasons, then what it is to possess and employ such capacities must be *sui generis* in relation to the realm of science. This is what Thesis 2 of the pentalemma claims: What it is to possess and employ concepts can only be understood in a normative context that involves the idea of correct and incorrect use of the concepts in judgments. Combined with Thesis 1, Experiential Naturalism, and Thesis 3, Scientistic Naturalism, the implication is that our

[17] On this point, McDowell's defense of the *sui generis* character of the space of reasons seems different from the classical attacks on psychologism of Frege and Husserl, as well as, for instance, Nagel's defense of *a priori* universal norms of rationality in *The Last Word* (1997).

perceptual experience cannot, qua natural occurrences, involve an actualization of conceptual capacities. That this conclusion is problematic becomes clear when it is viewed in relation to the last two theses of the pentalemma.

1.1.4 The Unhappy Oscillation

If we accept the three first theses of the pentalemma we are forced to accept the implication about the non-conceptual nature of our perceptual experiences, and with this the pentalemma is narrowed down to a forceful dilemma. The two horns of the dilemma are, according to McDowell, equally important for the possibility of holding on to the fundamental idea that our thoughts can be about the world. Why is this so? Let us first look at Thesis 4, Minimal Empiricism.

Minimal Empiricism as I formulated it simply states that our perceptual experiences can justify our beliefs. The idea behind it is, however, that if our experience is not where our judgements can stand to be corrected then they stand to lose all content:

> That is what I mean by 'a minimal empiricism': the idea that experience must constitute a tribunal, mediating the way our thinking is answerable to how things are, as it must be if we are to make sense of it as a thinking at all. (MW, p. xii).

That our thinking can be about the world must mean that our thoughts can be correct or incorrect according to how things actually are. For this to be the case, how things are in the world cannot be completely inaccessible to us, there must be a minimal contact with the world and, in our case, this contact can only be established in our perceptual experiences. This contact cannot be a merely causal relation, because such a relation would not give any content to the idea that we can be corrected through experience. The world would simply push our thoughts around but there would be no possible rational relation between where our thoughts would end up and how the world actually is. In other words, perception would not be able to justify our judgements. This line of thinking seems to me very difficult to dispute. The basic idea is that, if perception does not allow the world to put rational constraints on our thinking, we become unable to recognize our thinking as having any intentionality at all and further that the only conceivable way the world can, in a natural way, reveal itself to humans is in perception.

If we endorse Minimal Empiricism and if the consequence of the three first theses is accepted, i.e., that perception cannot have conceptual content, then we are forced to deny Thesis 5, which states that only what is conceptually structured can function as a justification. The consequence is that we must claim that the space of reasons extends further than the sphere of the conceptual. What we get is the idea of perceptual impressions that are not themselves conceptually structured but can nevertheless serve to justify our judgments, i.e., the idea of the Given. The idea of such conceptually naked impressions has been a basic assumption of empiricist philosophers, and it is the minimal empiricism left for Quine after his critique of the two dogmas of Empiricism; the dogma of a distinction between the synthetic and the analytical, and the dogma of empirical significance tied to individual statements. If this position is to distinguish itself from a bald naturalism that reduces the notion of empirical evidence to a notion used in a scientific explanation of human behaviour, it needs to claim that the sensuous impressions can be what warrant the application of a concept and not simply what blindly triggers the actualization of conceptual capacities. This dissociation proves highly difficult.

The distinction between the justified judgment and the justifying Given is the distinction Davidson criticizes as a dualism of conceptual schema and content (Davidson 1973-74). The content that is supposed to give a conceptual schema a foot in reality is a matter waiting to receive its conceptual form. The basic problem with the Given is that it lies beyond the limit of that which the subject can take a critical stance towards (cf. MW, p. 52). The Given is unquestionable, and if our thoughts' answerability to the world is given over to a Given we lose the idea of ourselves as beings who can resume responsibility for what we think. When I make up my mind about an empirical question, my thinking ought to be constrained by how the empirical world presents itself to us in experience; otherwise I cannot be a responsible thinker. If what ultimately is to justify my empirical judgments is a Given that has no conceptual content, I cannot point to what I see and say I believe P because I see that P is the case. All I can do is to say I believe P because..., and then point to what is given. This pointing cannot be a pointing to something I can share with you by telling you what I see; it cannot even be something I myself can articulate, as it is by definition non-conceptual. That our judgments should be under the control of such a given can, as McDowell puts it, never amount to a justificatory relation; it can at the most give us exculpations for our belief. Such exculpations would be analogous to how a person

dumped by a tornado in a place she is forbidden to enter is exculpated by the fact that her trespassing was beyond anything for which she is responsible (MW, p. 8, n. 7).[18] In fact not even exculpations are available, as it is the very idea of beliefs as items that can be about the world that is undermined. There is a strong expression from Merleau-Ponty: 'Our experiences have been mutilated from below' (PP, p. 65). This is why McDowell, with Sellars, calls the idea of the bare presences the Myth of the Given.

If we are still in the grip of the force of the argument provided by the first three theses, there is only one alternative to the Myth of the Given – to give up the idea that our thoughts need to have external rational constraints, i.e., to renounce Empirical Empiricism. This is exactly the consequence Davidson draws from his dismissal of the dualism of schema and content. The Myth of the Given tried to pull out a justification from what it could only make sense of as a merely causal influence from the world, given the denial of the conceptual content of perception. Davidson recognizes this but thinks that we can do without any justification from the world and make do with the internal coherence of our belief system as what justifies our beliefs: 'Nothing can count as a reason for holding a belief except for another belief' (Davidson 1986, p. 310).

This move will not, however, overcome the shortcomings of the Myth of the Given. It simply takes us one step further back from the world and as the problem in the first place was that the world was removed from the sight of the rational subject this will not help. The problem with the Myth of the Given was that it took perception to be non-conceptual and thereby made perceptions or intuitions blind, with the consequences that our thoughts became empty, i.e., not really thoughts at all since they could no longer even pretend to be of the world. Coherentism tries to rid intuitions of any epistemological importance, but to let the already empty thoughts interact cannot bring back intentionality, it can amount to no more than a 'frictionless spin in the void' (MW, p. 11).

Our dilemma should be clear by now. We could try to make the natural impingements of the world serve as justification and fail because we have a

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[18] In other places McDowell diagnoses part of the motivation behind Scientific Naturalism to be 'an intelligible wish to avoid responsibility' (McDowell 1998c, p. 181). If the real forces behind our beliefs are placed outside the space of reasons we cannot be blamed for what we believe. McDowell indicates that the rise of modern science would be part of the explanation of why we are especially prone to feel the responsibility of thought as a burden. One way to understand this connection would be through the specifically modern threat to the idea of intentionality as such and the apparent burden of proof in the face of modern radical scepticism.

preconception of the natural as that which is in the realm of science and therefore by definition it cannot have any normative force. To think otherwise would be to commit a kind of naturalistic fallacy where we take a brute impact as somehow being able to provide the means whereby a judgment can come to be as it ought to be for it to be justified. Or we could try to make our thinking independent of the world's impingements, in which case we avoid the naturalistic fallacy. The cost of this retreat, however, is that our thoughts become a play of empty forms (MW, p. 6) which, since no understanding is left, will lack even the pleasure of the free play of understanding promised by Kant's aesthetics. Without any alternative, this philosophical deadlock seems fit to provide a forceful motivation for giving up the whole project of answering the transcendental question of how empirical content is in the first place possible, and instead to engage in the project of explaining perception and cognition on a wholly naturalistic basis.

1.1.5 Anomalous Monism

If we consider Davidson's anomalous monism, it appears that an option opens up that would allow us to hold on to all five theses and so show that the pentalemma was not in effect a real pentalemma. McDowell only briefly mentions Davidson's anomalous monism in *Mind and World*. It could seem that McDowell's view is not so far removed from Davidson's, but McDowell argues that his conception of perception is made impossible by Davidson's anomalous monism (MW, p. 75). Anomalous monism can be seen as a way of combining recognition of the *sui generis* character of the space of reasons with Scientistic Naturalism. All the events that are made intelligible by being placed in the space of reasons are regarded as token-identical to events that, only under another description, can be subsumed under nomological laws. The *sui generis* character is here interpreted as a feature of a certain intentional description of an event and the description is *sui generis* in the sense that it is seen as in principle impossible to establish law-like connections between intentional descriptions of events and descriptions of events in natural scientific terms that would allow us to deduce the truth of one kind of description from the truth of a description of the other kind.

Anomalous monism in fact provides a way of combining the crucial implication of the first three theses of the pentalemma – that, *qua* natural occurrence, perception cannot involve conceptual capacities – with the idea that perception nevertheless does involve conceptual content. In fact, if it is assumed that perception

involves conceptual capacities, the three first premises function as local variant of Davidson's general argument for anomalous monism (Davidson 1980c, p. 208).

Davidson's first premise is the Principle of Causal Interaction – that at least some mental events interact causally with physical events. Thesis 1 of the pentalemma, Experiential Naturalism, can be regarded as a local consequence of this principle, taking perception to be natural in the sense of causally interacting with other events, some of them physical and none of them supernatural. Davidson's second premise is the Principle of the Nomological Character of Causality. Thesis 3 of the pentalemma, Scientistic Naturalism, simply adds to the Principle of the Nomological Character of Causality, that it is in virtue of such nomological, causal relations that something can be said to be a natural phenomenon. The third and last premise in Davidson's argument for anomalous monism is the Anomalism of the Mental, which states that there are no strict deterministic laws that could allow us to predict or explain mental events. The Anomalism of the Mental equates with the *sui generis* character of conceptual capacities claimed by thesis 2 of the pentalemma. The anomalism, Davidson argues, is at least partly a consequence of the ascription of mental states being made in the light of a constitutive ideal of rationality and he takes this to be crucial in order to keep humans as rational animals in focus (Davidson 1980c, p. 223). These are the characterizations of intentional explanations that McDowell takes over from Davidson and which he expresses by his claim about the *sui generis* nature of the space of reasons.

If we take the first three premises of the pentalemma and further add the thesis that perception does involve conceptual capacities, an anomalous monism of perception seems the only way to maintain consistency if we are not to regard the concept of perception as equivocal in meaning between an event of concept-involving perception and a natural event of perception. The anomalous monistic interpretation would regard the two meanings as two descriptions of the same event in intentional and in natural-scientific terms. Such an interpretation would make it possible to combine all the five theses of the pentalemma as I formulated them above. Perceptual experiences could be seen both as justifying our beliefs and as possessing conceptual content, only none of these characterizations would be of perception *qua* natural phenomena. The problem with this proposal, according to McDowell, is that it prevents us from saying that it is *qua* natural occurrence that perception can serve as the place where the world can restrain our thinking in a rational manner (cf. MW, p. 76). McDowell ends his brief

discussion of anomalous monism with the remark that, prevented from seeing the conceptual capacities as essentially involved in perception *qua* natural phenomena, we are stuck within the framework that generates the interminable oscillation (see also MW, p. 98). Why should this be so if anomalous monism manages to make the pentalemma dissipate? I shall try to show that the dissolution of the inconsistency provided by anomalous monism does not engage with the fundamental problem exposed by the pentalemma.

Davidson himself held that if X sees P, then X believes P and P is true (Davidson 2003, p. 695). That this view confuses perception with belief in what seems to me an unfortunate manner can be brought out by a counter example (cf. McDowell 2003, p. 680).[19] We can imagine a situation where we visit a shop that sells ties, but because we believe a friend who has told us that the lighting conditions of that particular shop make the colours of the ties appear different from what they actually are, we do not take the colours we see at face value. As it happens, however, it was the shop next door and not this one that had the illusory lighting conditions, and the conditions in the present shop are just fine. In this situation, a certain tie would appear to us to be of a certain colour and this appearance in fact would make the actual colour available to us. This situation shows the implausibility of holding that the only thing that can justify a belief is another belief. In the case described, we would be epistemically entitled to the belief that a certain tie is scarlet red on the grounds of what appears to us perceptually, and not on the grounds of a belief with such content. Given Epistemological Conceptualism the possibility of such a rational entitlement that does not lead to the acquisition of a belief shows that the relevant perception must possess conceptual content that could become the content of a judgment if, after consideration, one decided to take the appearance at face value after all (cf. McDowell 2006c, p. 10).[20]

As such, the example above is not, however, a counter example to an anomalous conception of perception but only to a belief-based coherentism. McDowell does discuss a position along the lines of the anomalous conception in the 'Afterword' of *Mind and World* (MW, p. 139). Here he points out that it seems open for Davidson to

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[19] The example also appears in a response to Stroud's critique to the effect that perception must contain an endorsement of a propositional content (McDowell 2002a, p. 277).

[20] Davidson seems to miss the point of this kind of example when he paraphrases it as an example of the kind where the lighting conditions are in fact so as to make any belief about the colours of what I see unwarranted (Davidson 2003, p. 695).

include perceptual appearances with conceptual content amongst the propositional attitudes that come together and provide justification for beliefs through their internal coherence. The possibility of such a position indicates that to remedy the transcendental predicament it is not sufficient to introduce a conceptual conception of the content of perception. It is not enough that the content of perception and judgments are claimed to be of the same kind, if perception stops short of the facts of the world. The spinning in the void was not primarily caused by the fact that perceptual experiences could have no rational influence on our beliefs but by the fact that perception could not be the place where the world itself could constrain our thoughts rationally. It is at this point that the specific problem concerning the possibility of hallucinatory appearances indistinguishable from veridical appearances arises. If such indistinguishable hallucinations are intelligible they seem to provide additional reason to take the perceptual appearance to be only indirectly of external objects. This is the problem McDowell confronts via his disjunctivist and relational account of perception. I shall return to these problems in the next chapter. In *Mind and World* the argument from hallucination is not explicitly discussed. McDowell mentions the possibility of perceptual error a couple of times but only to underline that the conception of perception he urges has no problem with allowing for such errors without this opening the door for radical scepticism (MW, p. 9, p. 112, p. 143). This is because the conception he urges involves regarding the world itself as conceptually structured and the veridical perception as openness to the conceptually structured facts of the world. The obstacle for such a view that he deals with directly in *Mind and World* is not the possibility of perfect hallucinations but the conception of nature that rules out that our perception can allow the world to function as a rational constraint on our beliefs (cf. McDowell 2002a, p. 291).

I think one way to bring out the problem of an anomalous monism of perception is to notice that it very easily ends up placing the perception as an event physically inside the perceiver.[21] If it is possible to generate an experience that is indistinguishable from a veridical perception by reproducing an event more proximate to certain brain areas than the object of the veridical perception, then it seems natural to

[21] The idea is indicated by McDowell in another short discussion of anomalous monism, where he writes: 'The fundamental mistake is the thought that a person's mental life takes place in a *part* of her.' (McDowell 2000, p. 16).

conclude that the experience also in the veridical case is merely causally related to the object alleged to be seen. In other words we are back in the picture where we must distinguish the impression of the world on the subject and the perceptual appearance, not as two ways of describing the same event but as one event that is the cause of another event. Apart from the problems with this picture, which I shall address in the next chapter dealing with disjunctivism, the picture seems to reenact the fundamental problem of both Coherentism and the Myth of the Given. Since the impact of the world is something that works behind the back of the subject as a mere cause, the world cannot rationally constrain our thoughts, and consequently perception cannot provide us with any justificatory relation to the world.

The general problem that also confronts anomalous monism is that, given Scientistic Naturalism, it is disallowed that human sensibility, our way of being affected by the world, can *qua* sensibility essentially involve conceptual capacities (cf. MW, pp. 97-98). It is *qua* sensibility that our perception is taken as a natural phenomenon. Sensibility is something we share with non-linguistic animals and it is a special, yet natural, way the world can affect biological organisms. Kant was clear on the need to take our sensibility to be infused with understanding if it is to open our eyes to objective reality. On McDowell's reading, Kant's difficulty of making room for such a conceptual sensibility within the empirical, natural world was part of the motivation behind his making the unperceivable Thing-in-itself responsible for the appearances of the empirical world (MW, p. 98).[22] The Davidson-inspired anomalous monism of perception moves in the opposite direction and makes the appearances a result of the impact of the empirical world, but the outcome is the same: the world as it is in itself is not itself manifest in the perceptual appearance.

1.1.6 Conceptualism as Alternative

McDowell's strategy is to intervene before we reach the conclusion that, *qua* natural phenomena, our perceptual experiences cannot involve conceptual capacities. What he attempts is to dismantle thesis 3, Scientistic Naturalism. His counterproposal is that we accept that there are natural phenomena that, *qua* natural phenomena, can only be made sense of by being placed in the space of reasons, and that the perception of mature

[22] This in effect makes Kant's transcendental idealism a way of tackling the pentalemma by denying thesis 1, Experiential Naturalism.

human beings is amongst such phenomena. The argument for his conceptual conception of perception is basically that it allows us to hold on to both Minimal Empiricism and Epistemological Conceptualism and so to avoid the dilemma that made intentionality seem problematic. If such a conceptualistic conception is not to result in a denial of thesis 1, Experiential Naturalism, and so a 'super-naturalism', it requires that our concept of the natural is not restricted to what natural science makes intelligible. McDowell does not present his so-called relaxed or liberal naturalism as a thesis for which he provides independent arguments, but as a Wittgensteinian reminder of an intellectual opportunity modern philosophers have often missed. The basic idea is that we can understand our learning a first language as the acquisition of a second nature that makes us responsive to reasons as reasons (MW, p. 84). To attain such responsiveness to reasons is what is specific for the life form of biological creatures that have the natural potential for maturing into rational animals. I shall not discuss this idea in its generality but focus on the conception of perception that McDowell proposes within his liberal naturalism.[23]

McDowell proposes to regard perception as undergoing a thorough transformation through our initiation into language. In mature human beings the content of perception is permeated with concepts that leave no room for residual elements of pre-linguistic perception. Perception of rational animals is seen as a passive, involuntary actualization of conceptual capacities in sensuous consciousness. That perception involves the actualization of the same conceptual capacities that the subject can actualize when actively making up her mind or when just passively acquiring a belief is essential for the content of perception to be able to serve as a justification for our beliefs, i.e., to avoid the Myth of the Given. That this actualization is passive and involuntary is paramount in order to avoid a conflation of perception with beliefs or judgments, which would reduce perception to just another belief and end up in world-impoverished Coherentism.

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[23] Nagel has a different way of expanding the concept of nature, namely by referring to the possible future revolutions of science. Nagel's assumption is that, as intentionality is possible, it must be able to be completely accounted for by science, only a possible science which must have revealed to us unknown natural laws (Nagel 1986, pp. 84-85, Nagel 1997, pp. 132-133). He admits that this belief in a future science has a quasi-religious ring to it when presented within our 'disenchanted' world view (Nagel 1997, pp. 132-133). This is a replacing of 'super-naturalism' with a 'super-scientism', and Nagel is perfectly clear on the fact that this does not solve any problems: 'Our position is problematic so long as we have not even a candidate for such an account' (Nagel 1986, p. 84).

We can ask whether such a conceptualist conception is committed to the claim that all sensuous awareness of a mature rational animal is necessarily permeated with concepts. It is certainly committed to the view that the ascription of such non-conceptual experiences would be of no use in facing up to the transcendental worry concerning the intentionality of our thinking. If such non-conceptual experiences were possible they would in a sense not be the experiences of the rational animal *qua* rational animal since they would not be potentially reason-constituting. McDowell sometimes adds a caveat to his claim that our experiences are permeated with rationality or concepts, with the qualifying statement: '…in so far our lives are distinctively human' (McDowell 2007a, p. 349). In so far as what is distinctive about human animals is that they are rational animals this is of course a tautological statement. There is no doubt that I can, as the animal I am, be perceptually sensitive to features of my environment without this sensitivity amounting to an experience in the strong sense of Kant's intuitions, i.e., experiences with conceptual content. I can be subject to subliminal priming because of the sensitivity of my body.

The fact that such perceptual sensitivity can be non-conceptual does not prevent it from being a way of gaining empirical knowledge. The case of the legendary chicken sexers would be a case in point. The chicken sexers, we are told, can sort chickens into males and females though when asked they cannot explain by which perceptual features they tell the difference. Presuming that the chicken sexers do not have paranormal abilities, their skill must be explainable in terms of their perceptual sensitivity to the environment, perhaps by reference to subliminal olfactory stimuli. Such sensitivity is, however, of a different kind than the perception by which we normally acquire perceptual knowledge.

When we acquire a perceptual belief under normal circumstances, for instance, the belief that there is a chicken in front of us, such a belief would be justified by our having the fact made manifest to us in perception: I know there is a chicken in front of me because I see that such is the case. The chicken sexers, on the contrary, cannot justify their belief by referring to what they see, as the male and female chickens judged only by their immediate perceptual appearances are *ex hypothesi* indistinguishable. What justifies the belief of the chicken sexer is her knowledge about her sorting skill. It is because of her reliable sorting skill that she is entitled to take the fact that, under the relevant circumstances, she is inclined to believe that a chicken is a male as a reason for believing that it is in fact a male.

As McDowell notes, the chicken sexers' epistemic position is equal to that of a bystander (McDowell 2002a, p. 280).[24] We can spell out the equalizing of the first- and the third-person perspective as follows. A third-person observer, who knows what a reliable chicken sexer is inclined to believe, can have the same and as good a reason to take the sex of a chicken to be as the sexer is inclined to believe as the sexer himself. The only asymmetry resides in the fact that the chicken sexer has first-person knowledge about what she is inclined to believe. This contrasts with the normal case of perceptual knowledge, where the epistemic role of knowledge about what the subject is inclined to believe on the basis of perception is relative to the perspective. From a third-person perspective, the inclination can be taken as evidence for the truth of the belief in question, given that the subject in focus is taken to be a reliable perceiver. From a first-person perspective, the inclination to believe that there is a chicken in front of one is not under normal circumstances taken as evidence that there is a chicken in front of one. The perceiver's reason to believe that she actually sees a chicken is not that she has an inclination to believe that there is a chicken, or even an inclination to believe that she sees that there is chicken there. It is the other way around. She believes there is chicken there because she sees that such is the case and it is the seeing that justifies her belief.

1.1.7 Qualifications of Mind and World

So far I have characterized the space-of-reasons mode of understanding and the natural-scientific way of making phenomena intelligible in accordance with how they are presented in *Mind and World*. Both of these characterizations however stand in need of some qualification. I shall first attend to the conception of natural science and then to the conception of the space of reasons in order to show how both of them are in a sense too narrow.

In *Mind and World*, the natural-scientific mode of understanding is said to consist in explanations via nomological laws. For two reasons McDowell wants to set his understanding of the contrast between the two modes of intelligibility apart from an understanding that marks the difference by reference to a contrast between reasons and causes (MW, p. 71, n. 2). The first reason is that he wants to leave it open that reasons might be causes. Facing misunderstandings on this point McDowell in other places

[24] Both Brandom and Stroud employ the chicken sexers in a critique of McDowell, who responds in McDowell 2002a.

makes it clear that he follows Davidson in thinking that some rational understanding is causal understanding and he mentions the way explanations in terms of reasons for believing or acting can be causal (McDowell 1998g, p. 335, 2002a, pp.270, 293, 2006a, p. 218). This possibility is something I shall come back to in the next chapter. The second reason is that he follows Russell and takes the idea of law-governed processes and not the notion of causality to be the basic organizing principle of science.

McDowell does not explain in any detail what is meant by subsuming under natural law but it would seem to be an ideological call to make natural science depend on nomological explanations that requires subsuming under universal laws. As has been pointed out this seems to rule out certain functional explanations of biology and the explanations of special sciences depending on *ceteris paribus* clauses (Macdonald 2006, Putnam 2002, p. 187). Furthermore the idea that the concept of law-governed processes should, as suggested by Russell, replace the notion of causality in our understanding of scientific explanations is far from obvious.[25] McDowell has conceded in a number of places that the notion of the realm of science he works with in *Mind and World* is an 'unsatisfactorily monolithic conception' (McDowell 2000, p. 98):

> So the intelligibility of the realm of law should have figured as at best exemplary of the kind of intelligibility I want to contrast with space-of-reason intelligibility, not as coextensive with the contrasting kind of intelligibility. (McDowell 2006a, p. 235).

This more pluralistic attitude to the realm of science does however not change the basic contrast with the space- -of-reasons intelligibility which McDowell upholds as *sui generis* in relation to any natural scientific explanation, however sophisticated (cf. McDowell 2000, p. 104).

The conception of the space-of-reasons intelligibility of *Mind and World* is restricted to making sense of empirical natural phenomena and this can seem to be too narrow a conception. The distinction between the two kinds of intelligibility is not meant to be exclusive, however. Just the fact that understanding pure mathematics is not a matter of making empirical phenomena intelligible makes the nature of mathematical

[25] For a recent challenge to the nomological conception of scientific explanation, see Woodward (2003), especially *Chapter 5*. Woodward argues for an interventionist, non-reductive account of causality, which takes causal explanation to be best understood in terms of counterfactuals that describe the outcome of interventions, human or natural. For a take on expanding the interventionist approach to the intentional actions of mature human beings, see Campbell (2007).

understanding different from the two kinds associated with the two contrasted logical spaces (cf. McDowell 2006a, p. 235). When we explain to someone why a specific mathematical proof is valid and use locutions like 'it is because of this and this definition', then the 'because' is not a causal 'because'. We could say we are trying to make the other see the reasons why the proof is valid. So in an extended sense the understanding of pure mathematics could be said to be space of reason-intelligibility. Now we have a picture where some causes are only intelligible as mere causes, some causes are only intelligible as reasons, and some reasons are intelligible as mere reasons.

Apart from mathematical understanding there might be other areas which belong to neither of the two logical spaces contrasted by McDowell. We could ask whether understanding a novel or a poem functions by placing items in the space of reason in the strict sense in which such placing serves to make empirical phenomena intelligible via reasons that are causes. Taken in a broad sense, I think there is no doubt that such items display space-of-reasons intelligibility in a way that makes the understanding irreducible to a natural scientific understanding. McDowell's main focus is however on the way the 'because' is used in rational explanations of perceptual beliefs: 'He believes there is a book in front of him because he sees the book', and of actions: 'He picks up the book because he wants to read' (cf. McDowell 2006c, pp. 1). As my focus is similarly on the specific threats to intentionality that arise when we think we are forced to accept a naturalistic conception of our perceptual sensitivity and our motility, I shall leave aside the complications that occur because of the non-exclusive character of the distinction between the two logical spaces. Even though there are interesting things to be said about the different kinds of intelligibility we can find within a broader notion of the space of reasons, such investigations are not necessarily relevant for the specific problems of perception and bodily agency I am dealing with.

1.2 The Transcendental Problem of Bodily Agency

1.2.1 The Analogous Problem of Bodily Agency

So far I have presented McDowell's analysis of the problem of intentionality in terms of a pentalemma and it is now time to ask what the analogous problem concerning agency looks like. The transcendental problem concerning perception is how it is possible that our thoughts can become responsible to the world through perception. The analogous problem concerning action could be formulated as the problem of how is it possible that

I, through my intentional bodily actions, can be responsible for things that happen in the world.

The transcendental problem of agency is not just a corollary of the transcendental problem of perception. This would be the case if the problem of agency were simply the problem of understanding how our intentions can have empirical content. If this were the problem of agency it would not require a treatment separable from the treatment of the problem of theoretical intentionality. The problem of agency consists in a threat to the very idea of such intentional phenomena that we can call willings, intentions or tryings. It is a problem of making sense of the specific practical mode of the intentionality that is involved in what we call intentional bodily actions. The problem of theoretical intentionality can be seen as a problem about how to hold on to perception as a specific kind of *passive* intentional phenomena, the intentionality of which can neither be reduced to the intentionality of beliefs (Coherentism) nor be explained in terms of a causal relation to an essentially non-conceptual given (the Myth of the Given). By analogy, the problem of agency can be seen as the problem of holding on to intentional, bodily actions as a specific kind of *active* intentional phenomena that cannot be reduced to either the intentionality of some inner mental intention or to some essentially non-intentional movements being caused by such intentions. If perception cannot be the place where the world manifests itself to us directly and where it can correct our beliefs, it is not just that we are faced with a sceptical problem about the possibility of knowledge, it is the very intelligibility of our beliefs as aiming at the world that is endangered. The analogous threat concerning agency would be the following. If my bodily movements cannot be where I express myself directly as an agent, and so where my will manifests itself in the world, then it is not just that we face a problem of epiphenomenalism, but we also run the risk of losing our grip on the very notion of willing or intending as our way of aiming for changes in the world.

The problem of theoretical intentionality is the problem of recognizing the specific character of perception as the intentional experience where the world manifests itself to us. In order to do so we need to recognize that perceptual capacities can inextricably involve conceptual capacities without these getting in between us and the world, and without such involvements of concepts making perception a supernatural phenomenon. If we fail to do so the rational constraint on our thoughts that the world should present cannot be rational because it is not recognisable as such from the perspective of the perceiving subject. The subject's mind comes under the control of

powers that are, so to speak, alien to her rationality. We cannot any longer make sense of our thoughts as being responsible to the world and perception as the place where they can face up to that responsibility. The effect is that we cannot make sense of the thinker as someone who can take responsibility for her own thinking by being responsive to reasons as reasons. This is the diagnosis of *Mind and World*, which to my mind presents a penetrating and perspicuous way to make sense of some central problems of modern epistemology.

What I propose is that there is a problem of agency of a similar kind to the transcendental problem of perception. I shall argue that it is that the problem of agency requires an approach that is analogous to the suggestion that we regard perception as the immediate and conceptual presentation of worldly facts. What we need in order to hold on to the idea of practical intentionality is to be able to regard our practical capacities to perform intentional, bodily actions as both inextricably involved in our bodily movements and as capacities of a conceptual nature. If we conceive of the bodily movements expressive of agency as a natural phenomenon – and what else could they be? – and if we furthermore regard the natural as that which is explicable by natural science, then the actual capacity of the body to move is seen as a capacity that must be understandable in purely natural scientific terms. The result is that our practical conceptual capacities cannot be involved in our bodily movements *qua* natural events. We get a separation of bodily motility and the practical conceptual capacity of the agent to form intentions and to direct her will towards changing the world. Consequently it has to be claimed that such intentions are recognizable as intentions solely on the grounds of their ability to cause the natural motility of the body to be set in motion (cf. MW, p. 90). In Brewer's apt phrase, bodily behaviour becomes 'more like a mentally induced reflex' (Brewer 1993, p. 311). In McDowell's pregnant formulation the problem is the following:

> Our powers as agents withdraw inwards and our bodies with the powers whose seat they are – which seem to be different powers, since their actualizations are not doings of ours but at best effects of such doings – take on the aspect of alien objects. It comes to seem that what we do, even in those of our actions that we think of as bodily, is at best to direct our wills, as it were from a distance, at changes in those alien objects. (MW, p. 91).

The picture we receive of our motility is the inverse version of the picture of our sensibility as a natural capacity that, as such, cannot involve the workings of our conceptual capacities. In such a picture sensibility can merely make us causally responsive to the world, and the sensibility of our body can only be causally responsible for changes in our inner perceptual appearances or in our belief system, with the consequence that Minimal Empiricism is abolished. What I will try to show is that the consequence of the separation of the motility of our bodies from our intentions is an undermining of what we might call a Minimal Pragmatism.

1.2.2 Introducing Minimal Pragmatism

By Minimal Pragmatism I shall be referring to the following requirement:

Minimal Pragmatism:

If an agent is to be intelligibly ascribed any intentions to perform bodily actions then she must be ascribed some practical rational capacity to perform teleologically basic bodily actions.

This is parallel to the thought behind Minimal Empiricism:

Minimal Empiricism:

If a subject is to be intelligibly ascribed any empirical beliefs then she must be ascribed some perceptual capacity to let the world rationally constrain her empirical beliefs.

Minimal Empiricism states that we can only understand the notion of beliefs with empirical content if we, the subject, have the necessary perceptual capacity to let the world rationally constrain our beliefs. As such this formulation does not explicitly tell us that we need a relational account of perception or that we need a conceptual account. It is only by working through the consequences of not regarding perception as relational and as conceptual that we might come to realize the need for such an account. Minimal Pragmatism states that we can only understand the notion of intentions with empirical content, i.e. intentions to perform actions that essentially involve bodily movement, if we can regard the subject as possessing some practical capacity that could allow the intention to have a rational bearing on the movements of her body. As such it does not say that we need a conceptual account of our bodily motility and an account of willing

or trying as essentially movement-involving. It is this need I shall try to demonstrate in the next chapter.

It could seem that there is a disanalogy between the two minimalisms, because the one refers directly to a perceptual capacity whereas the other refers to a practical rational capacity to perform bodily actions. In the formulation of the basic thought of Minimal Empiricism given above, the possible threat is so to speak on the surface, since the identification of the perceptual capacities referred to with our natural perceptual sensitivity to our environment seems quite natural. In the formulation of Minimal Pragmatism, the reference to the practical rational capacity of the agent might not appear to be so obviously identified with the natural motility of the body. It is this identification that I shall argue is needed, however, in order to hold on to the idea of bodily agency. Furthermore I shall try to show that the appearance of a need for a distinction between bodily motility and the rational capacity to perform bodily actions is a result of a naturalistic perspective which, eventually, will leave us with a picture of our movements as entirely out of our rational control.

To explain the import of Minimal Pragmatism I shall use two definitions. First, let me define what I shall refer to as the basic practical abilities of an agent, A:

Definition of basic practical ability:

A basic practical ability of A to X is an ability of A to intentionally be X-ing without making use of any means-ends knowledge of how to X by Y-ing. [26]

I shall talk of an agent's basic action repertoire as the collection of such basic practical abilities possessed by the agent. The second definition I want to work with is the following:

Definition of teleologically basic action

A's intentionally X-ing is a teleologically basic action if she has the ability to X without making use of any knowledge of how to X by Y-ing and if on this particular occasion she makes no use of any such means-end knowledge in her intentionally X-ing[27].

[26] This definition is a reformulation of Hornsby's definition of the actions in an agent's repertoire that are teleologically basic (Hornsby 1980, p. 84).

The connection between the two definitions is that it is by virtue of an actualization of a basic practical capacity of an agent that she, on a given occasion, performs a teleologically basic action.

When we understand a person as intentionally doing something (X) this often involves ascribing a means-end knowledge to the person, by which we make it intelligible why a person is intentionally doing the thing in question (is X-ing). If an agent flips a switch we can make minimal sense of this behaviour as intentional if we regard the agent as wanting the light to go on, and also attribute to him the belief that by flipping the switch he will turn on the light. In this case, the attributing of means-end knowledge is, at least on one conception of action-individuation, knowledge about what is in fact an identity-relation. The flipping of the switch is, on such a conception, when it results in the light coming on, identical to the turning on of the light. Independently of whether this is to be understood as an identity-relation, I take the relevant notion of means-end knowledge for the notion of teleological basicness to be the notion of knowing how to do Y by doing X. In the case of flipping the switch, it would, under normal circumstances, be something a person can do without performing some intentional action by which he flips the switch, and consequently a teleologically basic action.[28]

Hornsby mentions two other kinds of means-end relations that she takes to be relevant for the teleological notion of basicness, namely part-whole relations and preparatory relations (Hornsby 1980, p. 80). I do not find these relations directly relevant for the notion of teleological basicness as I defined it above and I shall restrict the notion of teleology to that kind of basicness. I shall briefly relate this notion of teleologically basicness with first the mereological kind and then the preparatory or procedural kind in order to clarify the notion and simultaneously establish a broader notion of practical means-end rationality.

The switching on of the light might be a part of the agent's intentionally lighting up the whole of her apartment. In that case we can make further sense of her turning on of the light by attributing to her the belief that doing so will contribute as a

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[27] This definition is a slightly altered version of the definition given by Grünbaum (2006, p. 86).

[28] It would be more correct to say that it is the description of the intentional action which is teleologically basic as it would be natural to take the two descriptions – 'A's flipping the switch' and 'A's turning on of the light' – to be of the same action. So to avoid the conclusion that the same action is both basic and non-basic, we should take basicness to be a mark of descriptions of actions. For convenience I shall sometimes refer to teleologically basic descriptions of actions simply by talking about teleologically basic action.

part to the greater action of lighting the whole apartment. We can say that a given intentional action is mereologically basic if it is carried out without any use of any part-whole knowledge about how other intentional actions contribute as parts to the whole of the action in question.[29] With teleologically basic actions defined as above, it seems impossible that such an action could be a whole that itself is constituted by other intentional actions. Given that for every intentional action some description must be the most teleologically basic, then this would also be the case for all actions that form part of a larger action-unity. This means that a teleologically basic description cannot cover more than one mereologically basic action.

A switching on of the light would also, under many circumstances, be a preparatory action, i.e., an action the agent believes must be carried out in order for him to be able to carry another action, such as showing a painting in the room to a visitor. In such a case, we can talk about making sense of the action by ascribing means-end knowledge that consists in knowledge about preparatory relations. In many cases such procedural knowledge will have been used in order to reach circumstances under which one can carry out a teleologically basic action. The agent might have searched for the light-switch in the dark by letting his hand glide down along the door-frame, and this behaviour makes sense to us because we take the agent to regard the locating of the switch as necessary in order to flip it. That the agent went through such preparation does not make his flipping the switch less basic from a teleological view point. It is still the case that the flipping of the switch would normally be carried out without any application of knowledge about how such an action can be carried out by doing something else.

In every case of someone carrying out an intentional action there must be some teleologically basic description of the action. If this was not the case it would mean that the content of the means-end knowledge that is actualized in the intentional doing would involve an infinite regression (cf. Hornsby 1980, p. 88). For each piece of knowledge about how to X by Y-ing, there would have to be another piece of knowledge about how to Y by Z-ing and there would be no limit to this regression. That

[29] Hornsby exemplifies the mereological relationship with a part of a movement which itself is identical to the lighting of a match and so seems not to take the part as necessarily itself amounting to an intentional action.

a person should possess such an infinite amount of knowledge in order to do anything intentionally is absurd.[30]

The notion of the teleologically most basic action is a notion that is tied to the first-person perspective of the agent. The teleologically most basic action is the agent's action under the description that is most basic from her point of view, i.e., the most basic of the descriptions under which the action is intentional. As it is exactly the action as intentional we want to make intelligible by placing it in the space of reasons, we must do so by at least understanding parts of the practical means-end knowledge exercised by the agent, of whatever kind it may be.

The definition of teleologically basic actions above has two immediate consequences (cf. Grünbaum 2006, pp. 83-86). The first is that the repertoire of basic action of an agent is not necessarily, and is even unlikely, to be identified with bodily movements intentionally carried out. The second is that whether an instance of a kind of action that falls within the basic repertoire of the agent is in fact carried out as basic depends on the circumstances. The first consequence is the point Anscombe makes when she writes as follows:

> In general, as Aristotle says, one does not deliberate about an acquired skill; the description of what one is doing, which one completely understands, is at a distance from the details of one's movements, which one does not consider at all. (Anscombe 2000, p. 54).

When tying my shoelaces I would normally make use of my acquired skill to do so and I would not be intentionally moving my fingers in the specific way I do. I would make use of my basic ability to tie my shoelaces and there would be nothing I do intentionally by which I try to tie my shoelaces. This does not prevent me from having some procedural means-end knowledge about how one ties shoelace, only that I would not normally be drawing on that knowledge in my performance. If, however, I was to teach a child how to tie shoelaces, I might draw on my means-end knowledge when I demonstrate how one proceeds. This illustrates the second consequence of the definition of teleological basicness mentioned above: Whether a type of action within an agent's

[30] Corresponding arguments would show the necessity of assuming mereologically and procedurally basic actions for any action sequence.

reservoir of primitive abilities is on a given occasion an exercise of the basic ability as such depends on the situation.

1.2.3 Practical Knowledge and Practical Concepts

The notion of the teleologically most basic action is a notion that is tied to the first person perspective of the agent. The teleologically most basic action is the agent's action under the description that is most basic from her point of view, i.e. the most basic of the description under which the action is intentional. As it is exactly the action as intentional we want to make intelligible by placing it in the space of reasons we must do so by at least understanding parts of the practical means-end knowledge exercised by the agent of whatever kind it may be. Consequently the exercise of a basic practical ability not only involves practical knowledge in the sense of a knowing how to X without relying on any means-end knowledge, it also involved involves practical knowledge in Anscombe's sense of non-observational and non-inferential knowledge of what one is intentionally doing. This provides a minimal basis for the claim that basic practical abilities are concept involving. When one is exercising a basic practical ability one is aware of doing so, i.e. one possesses an immediate practical knowledge of being engaged in an action under its teleologically most basic description. That the self-knowledge of the agent is practical does not imply that she cannot express the knowledge in a judgement. If someone in the other room asks me what I am doing while I am engaged in a task of making copies I might say that I am writing. Thereby I would express my practical knowledge and the subject matter of my knowledge would be no different from what the other person could observe if she entered the room. The link between basic practical capacities and practical knowledge supply an initial reason as to why I shall, with McDowell, sometimes refer to basic practical capacities as practical concepts (cf. McDowell 2007b, p. 367).

What makes my practical knowledge characteristically practical is the fact that it is knowledge that I possess in virtue of my realization of a basic practical concept of mine. When I introduced the notion of practical knowledge in the *Introduction* I mentioned one of the three ways Anscombe identifies as ways of repudiating the 'Why?' question that specifically asks for reasons for what a person is doing. In order to clarify the notion of practical knowledge and to identify the distinctive features that justify the claim that the notion is tied is to the first-person perspective I shall now present all the three ways of refusing the 'Why?' question identified by Anscombe.

I illustrated the first way of refusing the applicability of the 'Why?" question by the answer, "I didn't know I was cutting down the tree with the robin's nest". What this possibility shows is that there is a certain sense in which I cannot be wrong about what I am intentionally doing. I can be wrong about whether I am making ten carbon copies or not, and under certain circumstances even about whether I am writing anything, but if I actually perform some intentional bodily action then I cannot do so without having some knowledge about what I do under some basic description. We might imagine a circumstance under which I am simply hallucinating that I am writing but in fact I am doing nothing at all, in which case I would be wrong not about what I intentionally do but about me performing any intentional bodily action at all.[31] While performing an intentional bodily action I cannot mistake the description under which I intentionally do the thing in question with a description under which the action is in fact not intentional. I cannot, during the execution, mistake one intentional action of mine for another intentional action of mine.

That practical knowledge displays immunity to error through misidentification relative to action-descriptions is what is implied in saying that practical knowledge is non-observational.[32] If I had to identify my intentional action amongst a variety of actions solely on the basis of observation, I would only find evidence for what is actually taking place with my body and in its surroundings, but nothing that could take the place of my immediate practical self-knowledge. If you need to search for evidence you will never know. This is the reason why the second way the non-applicability of the 'Why?' question can manifest itself is if I need to observe to make sure that I am in fact doing what the question refers to (cf. Anscombe 2000, p. 14). If stand near a garden lamp which keeps going on and off, I might wonder why, and discover that it is my moving forth and back that triggers the lamp to oscillate like that. It is only on the basis of observation I find out I am the source of the lights going on and this is why the 'Why?' question would not apply to my making the light go on. The point is not that we cannot observe that an intentional action takes place, we might

[31] As we shall see in the next chapter some versions of the so called Trying-Theories would claim that in such cases of total failure we perform intentional and maybe even bodily actions (*Chapter 4, section 3.5*).

[32] I work with Evans' definition of the immunity in question: A judgement "*a* is F" is immune to error through misidentification if and only if it is based upon a way of knowing about objects such that it does not make sense for the subject to utter "Something is F, but is it *a* that is F?", when the first component expresses a knowledge which the subject does not think he has or may have gained in any other way (cf. Evans 1982, pp. 189-90). See Smith (2006) for reasons to prefer this definition.

do that by observing others. We might even imagine a situation in which some other person intentionally manipulates our brain so as to make our body perform certain 'actions'. In such a scenario I might know that someone intentionally makes my arm move and who that person is, but this would contrast with the ordinary way in which we know who the agent of our own intentional actions is. Under normal circumstances there is no room for doubt about who the agent of the intentional actions is when you yourself are the agent. In other words, self-ascriptions of agency for intentional actions are immune to error through misidentification relative the first-person personal pronoun 'I'.[33]

The third way of repudiating the applicability of the 'Why?' question is to answer that what was done was done via some involuntary movements.[34] Someone bumps into me and I spill soup all over you. I was the one spilling the soup but I did not do it on purpose, my body was out of control. In the case where some neuroscientist manipulates my arm, I have what has been called a sense of ownership for the movement; I experience it as my arm moving. I lack, however, a sense of agency, which I would normally have if the bodily activity was something I engaged in to carry out an intention.[35] When I perform intentional bodily actions there is, under normal circumstances, no possibility of knowing that bodily movements of my body occur but to wonder whether they are voluntary movements.

Let me sum up the background for each of the three ways of repudiating the 'Why?' question. The first way of denying the applicability was based on the possibility of not knowing what one is doing under one of its descriptions. The second way of denying the applicability was based on the possibility of knowing that something is being done but not knowing that it is oneself who is causally responsible for the thing in question. The third kind of situation where the question does not apply is a situation where I do know what is being done and I know that I am the one doing it, but where what is done is done via involuntary movements.

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[33] This was recognized by Shoemaker who used 'I am waving my arm' as an example of such immunity when he first introduced the notion (Shoemaker 1968, p. 557). Such immunity of self-ascriptions of agency has been denied on the basis of psychopathological cases (Jeannerod and Pacherie 2004). For a critique of this specific use of psychopathology see Legrand (2007).

[34] Of course, as Anscombe underscores, referring to the fact that something is involuntary is not a negative criterion that by itself can clarify the notion of an intentional action. This is why she goes on to identify a certain class of involuntary bodily movements, those known to occur non-observationally and whose cause can only be known by observation (Anscombe 2000, p. 15).

[35] See Gallagher (2000) for the distinction between sense of ownership and sense of agency related to bodily movements.

Anscombe's three ways of refusing the applicability of the 'Why?' question demonstrate the asymmetry between practical knowledge and observational knowledge of other people's intentional actions. In the case of watching other people, I can know that a person is doing something intentionally without knowing what she is doing. I can misidentify the action relative to a description under which I take it to be intentional. I see someone filling in a form and think she is making an application, but in fact she is checking whether the carbon-copy paper works. In the case of another's action, I can know someone is doing something intentionally without knowing who the agent is. This is the case if the agent is occluded from my perceptual field, as when I am chatting with someone on the internet. In such a case I could of course identify the agent under the description 'the person who writes this'. Furthermore, in many situations in which I have knowledge that someone is doing something intentionally, I would be able to identify the person via a demonstrative reference based on perception. However in some situations, for instance, if someone taps me on the back, I might not be able to know who was doing the tapping. Finally, in the case of others, it is possible that I mistake what was in fact a voluntary movement for an involuntary movement and vice versa. Watching someone who is in fact an epileptic and is known to fake epileptic attacks, or watching someone hooked up in the experiment where the scientist can make the subject's hand move, I might wonder whether what I see are voluntary or involuntary movements.

The fact that such asymmetry exists should not be taken as a reason to think that it is only in our own case that we can truly know that someone is doing something intentionally. Nor should it be taken as evidence for the thesis that we can only know that another person is acting intentionally and what she is doing by some kind of inference to the best explanation of some observed behaviour that is itself agency-neutral. The possibility of error in itself does not establish the impossibility of a direct perception of facts that can serve as a non-inferential justification of empirical beliefs. This is, as we shall see in the next chapter, a fundamental lesson taught by a disjunctivism of perceptual appearances. Though I think the discussion on knowledge of other agents is relevant to the issues raised in this thesis, I shall leave that aspect of the issue to one side in what follows. Let me just state that I think the proposals I make

concerning bodily agency could serve to make it intelligible that we can have direct perceptual knowledge of the intentional bodily actions of other people.[36]

The assumption that there is an internal connection between the idea of basic practical abilities and the idea of practical knowledge may seem to hyper-intellectualize our practical life. In answer to this, let me comment on some ways such a concern might be expressed. First, it is important to realize that the idea of the availability of practical knowledge as essential for our realization of basic practical concepts does not imply that we are always explicitly thinking about what we are doing while we are doing it. McDowell gives the example of a person walking on a pathway who turns to the right because she sees a signpost pointing to the right (McDowell 2006c, p. 2). Such behaviour may be completely unreflective in the sense that the person does not engage in any explicit practical means-end reasoning nor in any explicit determination of the fact that the signpost pointing in a certain direction gives her a reason for going in that direction. What shows that the person nevertheless was intentionally following the signpost simply might be the fact that if she was asked, 'Why did you go to the right?', she would answer something like, 'Because the signpost pointed in that direction'. As McDowell puts it:

> Acting for a reason, which one is responding to as such, does not require that one reflects about whether some consideration is a sufficient rational warrant for something it seems to recommend. It is enough that one could. (McDowell 2006c, p. 2).

This brings us to a second concern. It can appear as if there is an inappropriate moralizing attitude involved in the idea that we should understand our notion of intentional actions in terms of the idea of acting for a reason taken as a reason. Is everything we do really done for a particular reason? In order to hold on to the idea that our basic practical capacities are essentially conceptual we do not need to claim such a strict rationalism. As Anscombe remarks, among the possible answers to the 'Why?'

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[36] A further issue is how to combine the non-inferential and the factive aspect of practical knowledge. I think we need to do so, just as we need to combine the non-inferential and factive aspect of observational knowledge. The latter combination is what the conception of perception as object-involving is supposed to make available. The former should be within reach if the account of action I articulate is on the right track. See Grünbaum (2006) and in particular his 'The paradox of Practical Knowledge' (forthcoming) for a detailed and perspicuous exposition of the problem of reconciling the non-inferential and the factive aspect of practical knowledge. Grünbaum (2008b) argues for the need to conceive of bodily movements as agency-involving in order to account for our practical knowledge.

question we also find responses like, ‘For no particular reason’, or, ‘It was an idle action – I was just doodling’ (cf. Anscombe 2000, p. 24). McDowell gives the example of a person, who walking across a park sees a frisbee flying directly towards her and catches it. Such a person might answer, ‘I just felt like it’, if asked why she caught the frisbee (McDowell 2007c, p. 369). If the person is a skilled catcher she will catch the frisbee without realizing the more basic practical concepts by means of which she intends to catch it. Her action has practical, yet conceptual, content that can be specified by specifying the practical concept she realizes, a specification that corresponds to the teleologically most basic description of her action. The point of saying that she realizes a practical concept is that what she does is something she could do or refrain from doing for a reason and she could ask herself whether she has good reasons to do it. In short, her action falls within the scope of her practical rationality (cf. McDowell 2007c, p. 369).

The example of the frisbee-catcher raises the final concern I shall address in this context. The worry is that the idea of a repertoire of basic practical concepts gives too rigid a picture of our practical engagement with the world. In what sense does a person walk around with a preconceived collection of concepts of all the possible intentional actions she could engage in? We can begin to answer this worry by observing that McDowell specifies the content of the action of the frisbee-catcher as the concept of ‘catching this’. Part of the content of the practical concept I realize can be provided by perceptually-based demonstrative reference to the particular objects I am acting on. Such an opportunity shows that I do not need to possess concepts of the things I intentionally do prior to my engagement in the action. Here the demonstrative reference plays much the same role as it does in McDowell’s answer to certain objections to conceptualism concerning the content of perception. The objections point out that we cannot possess preconceived concepts of all the shades of the colour that we can discriminate between in perception. To this McDowell answers that we can form demonstrative concepts of everything that is given in perception and that this shows that the content of perception must already have a conceptual form (MW, p. 59). I shall return to the risk of hyper-intellectualizing when I respond to challenges for conceptualism posed by the work of Merleau-Ponty.

1.2.4 The Basic Idea of Minimal Pragmatism

Before I move on to the next chapter I shall say a bit more about the intuition I try to frame with Minimal Pragmatism. The point of Minimal Pragmatism is to say that we cannot make sense of our intentions as intentions if we cannot make it intelligible that we could have the capacity to carry out those intentions, i.e. some teleologically basic practical capacities. The idea is analogue to the idea of Minimal Empiricism. Minimal Empiricism says that if we cannot make sense of perception as the place where we are presented with how things are in a way that can rationally constrain our empirical beliefs then these beliefs become unrecognizable as beliefs. If it is not possible for us to let the world itself direct our thoughts towards it by letting the world show itself in perception, then the idea of our beliefs as being nevertheless directed towards specific facts of the world becomes a mystery. If the facts of the world never show up how are we to make sense of our minds as meeting up with those very facts? If we refrain from attributing super-natural, premonitional abilities to ourselves all we are left with is a vain hope for an inscrutable pre-established harmony between mind and world. Such a hope is a response to the total failure of making sense of what we usually assume as the most obvious thing in the world: That our beliefs can be about facts of the world and that our perceptual experiences can be of particular worldly objects. Minimal Pragmatism is the idea of a mutual dependence between our concept of intentions with empirical content and the idea of teleologically basic capacities parallel to the mutual dependence between our concept of empirical beliefs and the idea that perception is where the world reveals itself to us.

Minimal Pragmatism has some affinities with the common assumption that an agent can only intend to do what the agent thinks she is capable of doing. Minimal Pragmatism is formulated, however, as a thesis about the intelligibility of ascriptions of intention and so is not confined to the first-person perspective. From a third-person perspective we can sometimes make sense of an agent's trying to X even if we know that the agent is incapable of X-ing. This we can do if we can intelligibly ascribe to the agent the belief that she can, without further ado, X in the given situation or if we can ascribe some means-end beliefs to her about how to X by doing something else that we can take her to believe herself capable of in the given situation.

If a person tries to switch on the light and we know the bulb is burned out we can make sense of her trying by ascribing some means-end beliefs to her that we know are false. If a person enters a room with which she is familiar she might without

looking or in the dark try to switch on the light, just by letting her finger slide down towards the place she takes the switch to be just as she has done a thousand times before. Unknown to her the switch has been removed and her finger just strikes the wall or slides through the air where the switch used to be. In such a case we can make sense of her trying because we take her to have confidence in her ability to switch on the light without looking. If she tries to do it once again we might still understand her as trying to put on the light and say that she intends to put on the light. However if she, in the dark, keeps moving her hand through the air just as she did the first time, it becomes increasingly difficult to make sense of her as intentionally trying to put on light, because it gets increasingly difficult to regard her as regarding herself as having the possibility of any success.

The point of Minimal Pragmatism is not just that we need to be able to intelligibly ascribe to the agent at least some belief about the possibility of at least sometimes succeeding with her teleologically most basic trying if we are to see her as having any basic intentions to do something. The most fundamental point of Minimal Pragmatism is that we need to be able to make it intelligible that the agent could at all possess the required teleologically basic practical capacity if it is to make sense to see her as having the basic intention in question. If we are left without a clue as to how it could at all be possible that she could succeed, we also lose our grip on the idea that she could be trying to do the thing in question.

If a person sits staring at a matchbox and we ask him what he is doing and if he answers that he is trying to make the matchbox move, we would not be able to understand her right away. If we ask how he intends to make the matchbox move he might reveal that he is participating in an experiment in which subjects are to learn to make use of a technology that can make them able to move things by controlling the alpha-waves of their brains. The alpha-waves are registered and the matchbox is connected to the measurements so that it moves accordingly. The subject further tells us that she has been instructed that the best way to increase alpha-waves is by imagining that he is lying in her bed relaxing, so that is what he tries to do. This story may be true or it may all be in the person's imagination; in any case we can now understand her as trying to do something which she thinks will in turn make the matchbox move.

If, on the other hand, our matchbox starer replies that he intends to make the matchbox move without doing anything else and adds: 'You know, just like you can move your arm without doing anything else', then it becomes very difficult to

understand what he means. The difficulty is not just that whereas we can normally only move the matchbox by also moving our body, we can move our body just by moving our body. The problem is that we cannot make sense of what he is doing as being anything like what we do when we intentionally lift our arm. This is I think the insight Anscombe expresses when she remarks that if we try to lift our arm in the way such a person tries to move the matchbox, our efforts will be just as vain and that if the problem is how to move the matchbox in the same way as we move our arm, then there really is no problem (Anscombe 2000, p. 52): We can just reach out and move the matchbox. A way to make sense of the last part of Anscombe's remark is to say that at a certain level there is no difference between raising one's arm and moving a matchbox. In both cases we are dealing with intentional actions that can normally be carried out as teleologically basic actions. The first part of Anscombe's remark I take to express the thought that, in the case of the person who insists that he intends to move the match-box just like that, we can not make sense of him as intending at all. His position is just like someone who sits without moving a muscle and tells us that she is trying to make her arm move and says 'You know, just like some people can make a matchbox move just by thinking'. Here we are at a loss as to how what he is talking about could be intending at all.

We can compare the relation between basic intentions and basic practical capacities to the relation between, for instance, beliefs about colours and perception of colours. If a person is congenitally blind then it does not make sense to say that he can have beliefs about the colours of a match-box with content that matches that of a sighted person. Of course a blind can have a belief he can express by saying, this box is red, and can make inferences on the basis of such a belief, but there is a sense in which he has no real grip on the concept. His understanding is parasitic on an understanding of the concept which he is debarred from. The sense of the concept 'red' is dependent on the appropriate perceptual capacity. The situation of a paralyzed man is, as Danto pointed out it, perfectly analogous (Danto 1965, p. 146). If one of my arms is paralysed there is a understanding of what it means to raise one's arm I am debarred from. I do not possess a grasp of the practical concept 'raising my arm'. I may of course still intend to make my arm go up by lifting it with my healthy arm or by asking someone to raise it for me. This is like a blind person can come to the belief that an object is red by inference or by being told it is so. The claim of conceptualism is that in both these cases of negative abnormality what is missing is a conceptual understanding. In the case of

the blind person what is missing is not some non-conceptual given which would give content to the word 'red' or 'coloured'. What is missing is the passive involuntary actualization of colour concepts in sensuous experience. By analogy, what is missing in the case of paralysis is not just a physiological mechanism that would normally ensure that my intentions can be carried out. What is missing is the capacity to voluntarily raise one's arm or simply move it by actively realizing basic teleological concepts. We cannot get an exemplar of pure practical understanding by ripping of bodily motility. What the paralytic lack is a part of his practical rationality.

What I argue in what follows is that if we conceive of bodily movements as essentially agency-neutral occurrences our intellectual predicament will be similar to the situation of observing the match-box starer.[37] We will be unable to make sense of ourselves as even intending to perform any action, because we will not be able to make sense of our intentions as intentions. I shall try to show how conceptions of intentional bodily actions based on the agency-neutrality assumption violate the basic requirement of Minimal Pragmatism because they undermine the intelligibility of ascriptions of basic practical abilities. It is only because we know the possibility of being blinded that we can understand ourselves as seeing but this does not imply that we can make sense of the possibility of being blind without understanding what it means to see.

[37] Overgaard and Grünbaum suggest to use Husserl's notion of 'factual absurdity' (*sachlicher Widersinn*, cf. Husserl 1992, p. 103) to describe cases such as the matchbox-stirrer. Such cases are not logically contradictory but they have preconditions that when exposed reveal the case as unintelligible and impossible to bring to any intuitive fulfilment in our imagination (Overgaard and Grünbaum 2006, p. 12).

CHAPTER 2
A DISJUNCTIVIST ACCOUNT OF PERCEPTUAL APPEARANCES

2.1 A relational account of perception

In this chapter I introduce the idea of a disjunctivist and relational account of perception. I will then use this account in the presentation and discussion of a disjunctivism of action in the next chapter. I shall not attempt a thorough discussion of the pros and cons of disjunctivist accounts of perception but rather focus on the motivation which I take to be behind the introduction of such accounts. This focus will help bring out the ways in which the disjunctivism of action I envisage shares basic structural similarities with that of perception.

According to Mike Martin the prime reason for endorsing disjunctivism concerning perception is that such an endorsement is suitable to block rejections of what he labels Naïve Realism. Naïve Realism claims that the direct objects of perception are experience-independent objects of the objective world and that genuine perceptual experiences are such experiences that provide us with a direct access to the world. Here objects of perception are understood in a broad sense that include as well concrete individuals, as properties of such individuals and events in which the individuals partake (Martin 2004, p. 39). The reason why it is urgent to hold on to this idea of Naïve Realism is, according to Martin, that it is the best articulation of how perceptual experiences strike us as being when we introspectively reflect on them.[38] When I perceive the cherry tree in my yard it seems to me that I have the very tree itself presented to me and not just some representation of a tree. To use Husserl's expression: the tree is given in its bodily presence (*körperliche Gegenwart*/*leibhaften Wirklichkeit*). A fundamental difference between such a perception and my imagining a tree in the garden or visually recalling the tree in blossom, is that in these other experiences the intentional object is not necessarily given as actually existing independently of my experience. In other words, it is part of the phenomenology of perception that the object I perceive presents itself as an object in itself, independent of my experience. The phenomenological findings Naïve Realism attempts to accommodate are the following. On the one hand, is the directness of the experience: it seems to me that it is the tree

[38] In other places Martin admits that Representationalism can also account for the naïve realistic phenomenology of perception, but argues that perceptual imagination provides a serious phenomenological challenge to such accounts (Martin 2004). McDowell suggests that a non-relational account is phenomenologically of key (MW, p. 113, McDowell 1998a, p.243).

itself and not some intermediary item that I am directly aware of. On the other hand, it seems to me that what I experience is something in itself, independent of my experience of it. Naïve Realism argues that the best way to understand these phenomenological features is to take them at face value and say that when I perceive the cherry tree I have an experience which depends for its existence on the actual existence of the tree I see, a tree which in turn exists independently of my experience of it. A genuine perception is on this view a perceptual experience that is *object-involving qua* mental episode, meaning that no experience of fundamentally the same kind could have occurred without the existence of the appropriate candidate for perceptual awareness. For this reason such an account is also referred to as a relational account of perception.

When we characterize the view that genuine perception is object-involving as relational this can be explained in several ways. 'Relational' can be used to highlight the fact that the relation 'S perceives O', where 'S' stands for a person and 'O' for an existing object, is taken to be a primitive, which cannot be analysed in, for instance, purely causal terms (cf. Campbell 2002, p. 117). Or it can be a way of expressing that for a perceptual episode to be of the genuine kind is just for it to stand in a certain relation to an object, so that if the object did not exist, the episode would not be of the same kind (cf. McDowell 1998i, p. 477). But whether the relation is said to be between a person and an object, or between an experiential episode and an object, the basic idea is that a genuine perception consists in a relation that requires the existence of both of its relata.

Part of the motivation for such a relational view of perception has been the idea that the content of demonstrative propositions is *object-dependent*, in the sense that such content is only available for thought if the proper object exists. I take a thought content including the content of perception to be *object-dependent* when the content concerns a given experience-independent object and an intentional experience (perceptual or not) with the content in question could only occur given the existence of that object. The content of an intentional experience is then *object-dependent* when the intentional experience with that content is itself *object-involving* (cf. Martin 2003, p. 5). When I visually attend to the tree in front of me and say, 'That tree is blossoming', then the relationist claims that the propositional content of this thought is dependent on the existence of the object singled out in my visual experience.

The two most prominent alternatives to Naïve Realism are Sense-Data Theories and so-called Intentionalism or Representationalism. A Sense-Data Theory

incorporates the object-involvement of the perceptual experience in the shape of a sense-datum, but with the cost that perception cannot be a direct awareness of the worldly object seen and often with the consequence that the direct object of perception is seen as mind-dependent. The intentionalist or representationalist tries to capture the directness of perception by regarding perception as a direct awareness of a worldly object mediated by a representational content, but in return comes to deny that the content can be object-dependent (Martin 2004, p. 40). What these theories share is a denial of the object-involvement of perceptual experiences.[39] This common ground can be seen as an offspring of a shared understanding of what is often called the possibility of perfect hallucination. It is around this possibility of a perfect hallucination that the debate between disjunctivism and non-disjunctivism or conjunctivism revolves.[40]

2.2 The Argument from Hallucination

The idea of a perfect hallucination is the idea that for any veridical experience of a mind-independent object it is possible that I could undergo an experience that I would not be able to distinguish from my actual, veridical experience just by reflection, but where no relevant mind-independent object exists. If I am now seeing a cherry tree in front of me then there is a possible hallucinatory experience which from my perspective would be indistinguishable from my actual experience. The disagreement is then about what consequences an acceptance of the possibility of perfect hallucinations has for our conception of the intrinsic nature of perceptual experiences.

The conjunctivist would argue that since the two experiences are indiscriminable from a subjective point of view, the immediate object or the content of the experience must in each case be the same, or at least of the same fundamental kind. It is exactly the fact that the content of the experience is of a common kind that explains the possibility of confusing a hallucination with a genuine perception, the conjunctivist

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[39] To some extend we can regard the Sense-Data Theory and Intentionalism as counterparts of the Myth of the Given and Coherentism within Theory of Perception.

[40] I shall use the terms conjunctivism and non-disjunctivism interchangeably to designate a broad range of theories of perception including Sense-Data Theories and Intentionalism. Conjunctivism can be regarded as the position that takes the phenomenon of genuine perception to be analyzable into a perceptual experience itself independent of its worldly object *and* something more (most often a relevant causal relation to an object). Conjunctivism is a conjunctivist conception of genuine perception in contrast to hallucination whereas disjunctivism is a disjunctivist conception of perceptual appearances covering both cases of genuine perception and of hallucination. As such the direct opposite of conjunctivism is not disjunctivism but a relational account of genuine perception. Disjunctivism is a way of denying the Common Kind Assumption that motivates Conjunctivism.

would claim. In so far as the content of a genuine perception is of the same kind as that of hallucinations the content cannot be dependent on the existence of a proper mind-independent object and therefore the kind of mental episode that occurs when one actually perceives a mind-independent object cannot be object-involving. With Martin I shall refer to the consequences the conjunctivist wishes to draw from this "Argument from Hallucination" concerning the content and nature of perceptual experience as the Common Kind Assumption (Martin 2004, p. 40):[41] whatever kind of experience occurs when one is genuinely perceiving it is of the same fundamental kind as is a hallucinatory experience.

With the Common Kind Assumption in place there seems to be no room for a relational account of genuine perception. If a veridical perception is genuinely relational it can only be a relation between an experience and some experience-dependent object, because the relevant object must be shared between hallucinations and genuine perception. This is what a sense-data theory would claim.[42] If hallucinations are thought of as having a merely intentional object, then genuine perceptions will, because of the common kind assumption, also be regarded as essentially independent of the existence of an appropriate object (cf. Martin 2004, p. 42). The conjunctivist, of course, would not deny that the veridicality of a veridical perception is dependent on the presence of an appropriate object and presumably a suitable causal connection between the object and the perceptual episode, but this causal connection is regarded as extrinsic to the experience *qua* perceptual experience. The experience is in itself veridicality-neutral.

The point of a disjunctivist conception of perceptual experience is exactly to block the inference from the indistinguishability hypothesis to the common kind assumption in order to be able to hold on to a relational conception of perception (cf.

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[41] McDowell speaks of "the Argument from Illusion" as the argument that a disjunctivist conception is supposed to block (McDowell 1998b, p. 382). He also formulates the idea from which the argument for the Common Kind Assumption precede as the idea that an appearance of a red cube indistinguishable from a genuine perception is possible without there being any red cube there (cf. McDowell 1998a, p. 248, McDowell 2006, p. 22). I prefer to formulate disjunctivism in terms of hallucination versus genuine perception, because it is the Argument from Hallucination that is supposed to ground the general thesis of conjunctivism, i.e. the Common Kind Assumption that implies the object-independence of perceptual experiences.

[42] Martin notes that some of the original sense-data theorists, namely Moore and Russell, argued that the objects of perceptions are mind-independent (Martin 2004, p. 86, n. 8), thereby denying them status as either mental or physical objects (cf. Martin 2004, p. 40).

McDowell 2006a, p. 25, Martin 2004, p. 38).[43] According to the disjunctivist, the common factor between the genuine perception and the hallucination cannot be understood on its own, but has to be analysed in terms of a disjunction: Whenever there is a perceptual experience it is *either* of the genuine kind *or* it is a hallucinatory experience. 'Genuine' and 'hallucinatory' can then be regarded as determinates of the determinable 'perceptual experience' (cf. Hornsby 1997, p. 104, Haddock 2005, p. 164).[44]

When we say that a red object is coloured, we are not explaining what it is for an object to be red, in terms of the more fundamental fact of being coloured, rather we are identifying the red object as a member of a determinable kind which has 'red' as a determinate. Just as we cannot take the fact that something is coloured as a more fundamental fact than the fact that the object is either red or some other colour, we cannot take the fact that something is a perceptual experience as more fundamental than its being *either* a genuine perception *or* a hallucinatory experience. This is what McDowell expresses by saying that the disjunctivist conception denies that there is a *highest common factor* shared by genuine perception and hallucinations (McDowell 1998b, p. 388). McDowell formulates his disjunctivism in the following manner:

> Short of the fully Cartesian picture, the infallibly knowable fact – it seeming to one that things are thus and so – can be taken disjunctively, as constituted either by the fact that things are manifestly thus and so or by the fact that that merely seems to be the case. On this account, the idea of things being thus and so figures straightforwardly in our understanding of the infallibly knowable appearance; there is no problem about how experience can be understood to have a representational directedness towards external reality. (McDowell 1998a, p. 242).

That the fact that it perceptually appears to the subject that things are in a certain manner is constituted by the obtaining of one of the disjuncts means that a statements about an appearance is made true by the truth of either the one or the other disjunct.

[43] It is possible to combine a disjunctivist conception of perceptual experience with a non-relational view, if we take a relational view to imply a relation to a singular object and not just the idea that the experience depends on some object being actually there (cf. Smith 2008, p. 315). McDowell has raised doubts about the possibility of an intelligible motivation for such a position (McDowell 1998a, p. 249, n. 36).

[44] For a recent discussion of the distinction between determinables and determinates see Eric Funchouser (2006).

This in the same manner as the fact that something is coloured can be constituted by, for instance, the fact that it is either red or blue.

2.3 The commitments of conjunctivism

What the Common Kind Assumption amounts to is the idea that the fact that it perceptually appears to the subject that things are thus and so is constituted by a fact that is independent of whether the experience is of a veridical or of a hallucinatory kind. I do not think the assumption requires that an appearance can exist independently of the existence of either a veridical experience or a hallucination. All cases of a perceptual appearance could be a constitutive element of either a veridical perception or a hallucination and it is hard to conceive of it being otherwise. All the assumption requires is that there is nothing intrinsic to the fact that there is a perceptual experience that determines whether the experience is veridical or hallucinatory.

I do not think a conjunctivist would see himself as committed to the claim that one can know that it seems to one that things are thus and so, without knowing that, in that case, things are either as they seem or they are not (cf. Smith 2002, p. 198). What the conjunctivist is committed to and what he would also admit to being committed to is that when a perceiver knows that he has an appearance of things being thus and so, then this knowledge is knowledge of a further fact than the fact expressed by the exclusive disjunction, that he is *either* enjoying a veridical perception of things being thus and so *or* he is suffering from an hallucinatory experience, where it merely seems that this is how things are.

The Common Kind Assumption is sometimes said to consist in a commitment to the idea that we can grasp the fact that things seem to the subject to be a certain way without appeal either to the fact that the subject is having a veridical perception or to the fact that the subject suffers from a hallucination (cf. Haddock 2005, p. 163). This is a way of expressing the conjunctivist's commitment to the idea that we can grasp the fact of an appearance as something which is in itself independent of whether it is of the veridical kind or not. It is this possibility that is supposed to allow for a reductive analysis of genuine perception in terms of the causal connection between

two independently intelligible items: The perceptual experience as such and the mind-independent object in itself.[45]

I take it to be unlikely that a conjunctivist would admit to a commitment to the idea that a perceiving subject could have the concept of a perceptual appearance without any awareness of the possibility that things can seem to be in a certain way without actually being as they seem. The conjunctivist would most likely want to hold on to the idea that, for a perceiver to possess the notion of a perceptual appearance, she needs to grasp the distinction between a veridical and a non-veridical appearance. For it to make sense to ascribe a grasp of this distinction to the perceiver, we need to see her as believing that it is possible that, at least sometimes, the way things perceptually appear to her is the way things actually are. What the conjunctivist claims is that in constructing a theory of perception we can make use of a notion of appearance that can be defined without any reference to the facts that constitute the appearance as either a hallucinatory experience or a veridical experience. We can compare this with the way some theories of intentional bodily action would claim that we, as theorists, can understand the facts that constitute a mental item, such as an intention or a trying, independently of any reference to the facts that would constitute the carrying out of such an intention or the success of the trying. Such a theoretical claim need not imply a denial of the fact that the agent herself can only intend to X or think she is actually trying to X, if she has the belief that X-ing is something she is capable of doing by virtue of her practical bodily capacities.

The critical question is whether the conjunctivist is entitled to make the above distinction between the perspective of the perceiving subject and the perspective of the theorizing subject. The conjunctivist claims that, from a theoretical perspective, we can understand what it means that a subject has a perceptual appearance independently of any reference to the facts that would go into constituting the appearance as a veridical or a non-veridical perception. If this is so, however, why should it not be possible in principle for a perceiving subject to possess the concept of

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[45] By a reductive analysis I mean an understanding that seeks to provide the necessary and sufficient conditions for a given phenomenon in terms that refer to more fundamental phenomena that in turn can be made intelligible without reference to the analysed phenomenon. It is what Dummett has called a full-blooded reductionism (Dummett 1978, p. 360). It tries to reduce a problematic class of propositions to a class of independently intelligible propositions that are claimed to specify the facts in virtue of which the reduced class of sentences are true. Such full-blooded reductionism is not necessarily intended as reductive in the sense of bald naturalism.

an appearance without yet possessing the idea that such appearances potentially are manifestations of how things are in the world? I think one way to put McDowell's most fundamental critique of conjunctivism would be to say that conjunctivism cannot avoid a commitment to the idea of such a perceiving subject being ignorant of the possibility of a world as that to which appearances, when they are veridical, give access. As far as I can see, it would amount to a *reductio ad absurdum* of a full-blooded reductionism concerning veridical perception, if it is correct that conjunctivism is forced to claim that the idea of such a world-impoverished but yet perceiving subject makes sense.

One way for the conjunctivist to try to make sense of such a perceiving subject with no concept of the distinction between veridical and non-veridical perception would be to appeal to the perception of non-linguistic animals or pre-linguistic human infants. In such cases, it could be claimed, we have pure appearances without the perceiver having any concepts of veridicality or even of what appearances are. Such a response would constitute yet another version of the Myth of the Given. It would reiterate the fundamental problem of accounting for how such a naked appearance could even begin to be dressed up in conceptual clothing if we do not already assume a conceptual awareness of their nakedness, i.e., if they do not already have conceptual content.

2.4 The Cartesian picture of the mind

A central underlying assumption, which McDowell pinpoints as motivating the inference from indistinguishability to the common kind assumption, is the so called 'fully Cartesian picture' of the mind. The full-blown Cartesian picture of the mind comes about as a certain interpretation of the fact that we can have knowledge of perceptual appearances independently of knowing whether we are undergoing a genuine perception or not. [46] The Cartesian takes the possibility of such knowledge as an

[46] It might seem that disjunctivism rules out this possibility. McDowell states that under some circumstances an experience indistinguishable from an experience of being confronted with a tomato, might not count as an experience of the presence of a tomato even though it results from actually being confronted with a tomato (McDowell 1998c, p. 390, n. 37). Such circumstance could be that one is confronted with a lot of tomato facades and only a few real tomatoes or that one's perceptual apparatus is sometimes out of order and sometimes not without one being able to tell. Under such circumstances it might not be possible that it can seem to me that P without me knowing whether the fact that P is manifest to me or whether it merely appears to be manifest, because I know the circumstances to be so as to undermine that I could be in a position to know that P just by looking. However if I am in a situation where I wrongly think that my perception is unreliable, as in the example with the tie-shop used in the previous chapter, I might have second thoughts about my reasons for believing my perception to be

expression of the knowledge in question being of a fact that is itself constituted in splendid isolation from any facts of the world to which perception might give access. In this picture the mind is portrayed as both entirely self-enclosed and completely self-disclosed.

The mind is self-enclosed in the sense that the realm of the Cogito is regarded as an ontologically autonomous region of facts, which is set apart from the world to which we might have access to in perception. This is 'the idea of a self-contained subjective realm, in which things are as they are independently of external reality (if any)' (McDowell 1998a, p. 242).

The mind is self-disclosed in the sense that given optimal epistemic conditions the whole truth and nothing but the truth about consciousness is revealed to consciousness itself. This is the idea 'of a realm of reality in which sameness and differences are exhaustively determined by how things seem to the subject, and hence which is knowable through and through by exercising one's capacity to know how things seem to one' (McDowell 1998a, p. 249).

Given the idea of a region where reality is exhausted by its appearance, the acceptance of the Indistinguishability Hypothesis, immediately leads to the Common Kind Assumption. If two appearances are in principle indistinguishable from the subject's point of view, then the facts that constitute the one kind of appearance cannot exceed the facts that are constitutive of the other, hence *qua* subjective experience a veridical experience must be of fundamentally the same kind as a hallucination. Once this is established it follows that a genuine perception cannot qua experience be of a kind that depends on the existence of a proper, mind-independent object.[47]

Given a certain first-person epistemic authority about how things appear to the subject, which I think we have good reasons to accept, the idea of complete self-disclosure can seem to commit one to a Cartesian dualism of substances (cf. McDowell 1998a, p. 245). The epistemic authority of the subject becomes an absolute authority when we assume that all aspects of the subjective or inner facts of appearances are revealed to the subject herself. It is difficult to see how the idea of a region of reality

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unreliable and this will be equivalent to a wonder whether my experience is veridical or not. We can imagine a similar case where I to begin with wrongly think that my experience is a hallucination of an object, but later come to doubt this. Under such circumstances I can reasonably wonder whether my experience is of a genuine or of a hallucinatory kind.

[47] Mike Martin (2004) delivers some intriguing arguments to the effect that the conjunctivist is committed to an excessive idea of a subject's access to her own consciousness as potentially infallible.

over which a single person possesses full epistemic authority can be compatible with a materialistic conception of that region. Material reality is open to investigation from all sides and the conclusion seems to be, that the presumably completely private region of reality must be an immaterial microcosm.

Even if one doubts the idea of complete self-disclosure because it seems incompatible with materialism the idea of subjectivity as a self-contained ontological sphere can still deliver motivation for the Common Factor View (cf. McDowell 1998a, p. 245). Often the possibility of imagining the perfect hallucination is backed up by an argument that seeks to show the empirical possibility of such experiences. The first premise is that our normal perceptions are caused by a series of events which begin where the seen object is placed and proceed through the retina into our brains which somehow make the experiences take place. The second premise is that the relation between cause and effect is contingent and therefore any effect could have had a different cause than it actually had. From these assumptions it seems to follow that any given genuine perception could have been brought about even if the seen object did not exist. This shows that it cannot be an essential feature of any given perception that it is of an existing object. Any given genuine perception could *qua* experience have been a hallucination.

The argument above reveals what according to McDowell is the fundamental motivation for the assumption of the ontological autonomy of the facts that constitute appearances namely what I in the previous chapter named Scientistic Naturalism (cf. McDowell 1998a, p. 243). Within the framework of Scientistic Naturalism the relation between appearances and the objects of the world can only be an external, causal relationship, if we are not to make it a supernatural relationship. The urge to develop a scientific psycho-physics can help explain why Descartes searched for the place in the brain where the causal exchange between the mental and the physical could be located. In modern versions of the idea of the self-containment of the mental the Cartesian dualism is replaced by the idea that the mental is literally inside the person and presumably to be located in the brain. In so far as events are defined by their spatio-temporal properties a scientistic monism, which takes all mental events to be identical with events identifiable in purely natural-scientific terms, is forced to set up a spatial boundary between the parts of the world that are mental and the parts of the world that are purely physical. Because the mind-independent objects of perception, be it facts or individual objects, are obviously not of a mental character, my perceptual experience

cannot, on this picture, be dependent for its existence on the existence of the object.[48] The perceptual appearance is identified with an event further downstream the causal flux that flows from the object, presumably with an event that takes place on the inside of the person's body.

Under the conditions of Scientistic Naturalism the acknowledgement of the possibility of a perfect hallucination naturally leads to the Common Kind Assumption. This consequence is independent of whether Scientistic Naturalism tries to accommodate the infallible knowledge of appearances via a full-blown Cartesian substance dualism or whether it takes the shape of a Cartesian materialism. Cartesian materialism is the position that assumes that the persisting thing, presumably the brain, that possesses mental properties is separable from all the things that lack such properties.[49] The situation we are in is the characteristically modern epistemological predicament, namely the apparent need to reconstruct our knowledge of the world starting out from veridicality-neutral appearances.

2.5 Modern scepticism

If we accept that we as perceivers are placed at the end of a receiver which delivers input to our brain, then the idea of perception as the place where the world can make itself manifest is under threat. The problem is that on this picture we cannot take at face value a justification of a belief that P via expressions such as, 'because I can see that P is the case'. All we can face as perceivers is something that falls short of the fact and as such is consistent with non-P. If this is our predicament, we will be forced to try to reconstruct something with the epistemic value of 'I can see that P' that is something factive which implies 'that P'. In so far as we follow an internalist intuition concerning the nature of justification, this has to be done from the perspective of the perceiver, who must then start out from a veridicality-neutral fact of 'It seems that P'. This is a Sisyphean labour, however. If we start with something less than factive we can never reach something that can provide a justification for a belief that P with the same certainty as can the fact that we see that P (cf. McDowell 1998b, p. 399).

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[48] A materialism or physicalism that prefers to talk about physical events as constituting mental events or of mental events as composed of physical events rather than to talk of identity would have the same consequences.

[49] I borrow this characterization of the residual Cartesianism of materialism from Hornsby (1998, p. 380).

According to McDowell, the characteristically modern version of scepticism is motivated by an often inchoately realized transcendental worry about the very idea that perceptual appearances purport to be presentations of objective reality. What is under threat is not just the possibility of knowledge of the world but the very notion of subjectivity as a mode of being in the world. One way the radicalism of modern scepticism manifests itself is in the way it not only threatens our perceptual knowledge of the world, but also our bodily presence in the world and thereby our position as agent in the world (cf. McDowell 1998a, p. 240. n. 24). The problem of agency referred to here is not the specific problem of agency I will be dealing with later in this chapter, but a corollary of the general threat to intentionality. The general threat in question is, I think, on a par with the transcendental threat displayed in *Mind and World*, but it manifests itself as a problem concerning our understanding of our perceptual appearances *qua* subjective experiences and not as a problem of our understanding of them *qua* natural events.

The problem is the following. Scientistic Naturalism forces upon us a view of the mind as a self-sufficient region of facts, because the domain of the mind needs to be scientifically determinable within objective time and space in order to enter into causal relations with the rest of the world. The result is an internalizing of the perceptual appearances along with all other mental occurrences. The perceptual appearances are conceived as independent of whatever they supposedly make appear when they are veridical. Such a view rests on the assumption that we can understand our capacity to gain knowledge about appearances without reference to our ability to gain knowledge of the world through these appearances. This must be so because, according to the Common Kind Assumption, the appearances are constituted by facts which do not involve the facts that in each case determine the veridicality of the appearance. A further implication is that since an appearance is defined by its representational properties, i.e., by its purporting to be of objective reality, it must be claimed that we can make the objective purport of a perceptual experience intelligible independently of any reference to facts that actually make it possible for such an experience to be of objective reality. If we could not make sense of the idea of a perceptual experience as purporting to be of objective reality without reference to how such an experience could actually be of reality, we would have undermined what was to serve as a starting point for our reconstruction of our knowledge of the world. Furthermore we would lose our

grip on one of the autonomous elements that was supposed to go into the reductive causal analysis of what constitutes a genuine perception as distinct from a hallucination.

It is precisely the need to assume the conceptual separability of the idea of experiences as having objective purport and the idea of experiences as possible presentations of facts of the world that, according to McDowell, constitutes the transcendental predicament that surfaces in the shape of modern radical scepticism. McDowell argues that if we can so much as make sense of the idea that it is so much as possible that we can have an environmental state of affairs directly presented to us in experience, then this would constitute a response to radical scepticism (cf. McDowell 2006b, pp. 24-25). This is so because radical scepticism thrives on an apparent unintelligibility of the idea of direct realism, relying, as it does, on the force of the Argument from Hallucination.

The response McDowell gives to radical scepticism has both a positive and negative element. On the positive side he argues that we can make sense of direct realism namely via a disjunctive account of appearances. On the negative side he argues that if we accept the unintelligibility of direct realism we also lose the intelligibility of the idea of experiences as even purporting to be of objective reality. The negative side has the character of a negative transcendental argument that seeks to establish the negative consequences of radical scepticism for the intelligibility of the idea of appearances with objective purport. The argument is transcendental in the sense that it seeks to establish a necessary conceptual link between two features of our experience, a link without which we cannot make sense of appearances at all. It is argued that a condition of possibility for the intelligibility of the objective purport of perceptual experiences is the intelligibility of the possibility of such experiences being, at least in some cases, constituted by the direct manifestation of the facts of the world (cf. McDowell 1998c, p. 410, 2006b, p. 23).

McDowell presents different sketchy versions of the negative transcendental argument, to show how the sceptic's position is parasitic on the notion of direct perception. The basic idea is that the notion of a mere appearance is derivative from that of appearances conceived of as actually presenting the objective world as it is (cf. McDowell 1998c, p. 410, 2006b, p. 23):

> That is: such experiences can present us with the appearance that it is raining only because when we have them as the upshot (in a suitable way) of the fact that it is raining, the fact itself is their object, so that its obtaining is not, after all, blankly external. (McDowell 1998, p. 389)

The transcendental argument can be seen as putting forward a version of Minimal Empiricism, which McDowell also refers to as transcendental empiricism (McDowell 2000, p. 6). It is so to speak a deeper version of Minimal Empiricism than the one I presented in the previous chapter. It is deeper in the sense that it digs deeper into the perceptual experience, as it does not just state a necessary link between empirical beliefs and perceptual world-presentations but between perceptual appearances and perceptual world-presentations. This explains why the transcendental argument against the Common Kind Assumption becomes relevant in the context of *Mind and World* when the suggestion of an anomalous monistic conception of perceptual appearances enters the scene (cf. *Chapter 1, 1.1.5).*

If we are to make sense of the idea that appearances can have representational content, then we must be able to see the world as able to present itself in appearances and not just as working as a hidden cause behind the appearances. If the world is such a hidden cause we are faced with the familiar challenge of scepticism, but not just that. The transcendental argument reveals that the mere appearances can no longer be recognized for what they are. Scepticism cannot keep up the appearance of appearances with objective purport. This is so because it requires us to make sense of an appearance as having a specific content that can match how the world actually is, without yet having any idea of how the world could manifest itself to us. How should it be possible that the mind should have the power to make portraits of the world if we do not allow for the possibility that the world can figure as a model for the mind? The mind would be blind and everything would, as McDowell puts it, go dark within (McDowell 1998a, p. 249). The resource we are left with to make sense of a possible correctness of an appearance is an external causal relation to the world. However, an appeal to such an

external relation would succumb to the Myth of the Given and would need to adhere to the infeasible dualism of schema and content.[50]

2.6 Disjunctivism as alternative

The negative transcendental argument was intended to show that radical scepticism is self-deceiving when it pretends to be able to make sense of appearances as purporting to be of objective reality while basing its scepticism on an alleged unintelligibility of direct realism. Without an alternative account of why direct realism is after all intelligible, the transcendental argument could be read as a further radicalization of scepticism which leads to the conclusion that not even the idea of empirical content is intelligible. A reasonable response to such a conclusion would be leave behind any internalist intuitions concerning the notion of knowledge and pursue the project of a full-blown externalist account (cf. McDowell 1998c, p. 404).[51]

What a disjunctivist account of appearances offers is a way to appreciate both the possibility of infallible knowledge of appearances and the possible illusory character of such appearances, without this putting us under the threat of radical scepticism evoking the apparent need to establish our right to trust any appearance. We can deny that the indistinguishability of hallucinations and genuine perceptions means that we are stuck with less than the world itself when we have experiences of the genuine kind. To do so we need to deny that the truth and nothing but the truth about our experience *qua* subjective experience is revealed to us just by us having the experience in question. This is what disjunctivism does. The fact that a genuine perception is of this particular object is intrinsic to the experience, nevertheless I cannot have infallible knowledge about the fact that this experience is not a hallucination. My experience is not eminently transparent to myself and the Cartesian discovery of a sphere of infallibly knowable truths concerning appearances was not a discovery of the perfect self-disclosure of consciousness. Just because some facts about my experience are not infallibly knowable it does not follow that I cannot have non-inferential

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[50] McDowell refers to a number of overlapping dualisms that stand in the way of a relational account of perception: Schema-Content, Form-Matter, Subjective-Objective, Inner-Outer (McDowell 1998c, pp. 408-409).

[51] Here we see the connection between bald naturalism and a full-blown externalist conception of epistemology. They both claim that notions, such as that of knowledge, that work within the space of reasons, can be made intelligible solely in terms that do not themselves serve to place things in the space of reasons.

knowledge about what I see. All that follows is that my experience is subject to error, and that is common sense and does not pose a sceptical threat. The only reason why we think we need to re-establish our knowledge of the world on the basis of something infallibly knowable is because we take what we are presented with in experience always to fall short of the facts of the world. With a disjunctivist account we can maintain that I can know that I see that P and that that this knowledge can, though it is fallible, justify my belief that P.

The fundamental hindrance for the disjunctivist account is the idea that there must be a sharp boundary between the mind and its environment. According to Scientistic Naturalism, the subjective occurrences must be identifiable in strictly scientific terms if we are to make it intelligible that they can causally interact with the physical world. Such a scientistic monism excludes the possibility that genuine perception could be essentially object-involving. If we follow the argument from *Mind and World* and work with a relaxed naturalism that does not restrict nature to what is within the scope of natural science, we can accommodate a disjunctive account of appearances and a relational account of genuine perception. We can regard the mind and the world as interpenetrating one another in perception (cf. McDowell 1998a, p. 241). Perception begins with the objects of the world and there is no telling where perception ends and the purely physical world begins.

What disjunctivism is supposed to make possible is an acknowledgement of perception as both a natural and a subjective occurrence without the consequences that it must, *qua* natural event, be localized within the head of the person and the consequence that it must, *qua* subjective experience, be transparent for the subject herself. The mind is not self-enclosed because it can penetrate the world and let the world figure in the content of perception. The mind is not perfectly self-disclosed because it is penetrated by the world and the world is not exhausted by the subject's perspective on it. The possibility of mistaking a hallucination for a perception is the possibility of being in error about the subjective nature of one's conscious experience. To recognize the possibility of such a deception is not to radicalize Cartesian scepticism. To acknowledge the possibility of perfect hallucinations is simply another way of expressing the fact that perception is imperfect. Because perception is of objects that transcend the experience of perceiving, it is in principle always possible that an isolated perceptual experience can be revealed later as erroneous. The Cartesian idea that the subject has an epistemic authority concerning how things appear to her can be

maintained. Instead of taking the authority to cover the full extent of the subjective nature of one's experience we can recognize it as covering two fundamentally different kinds of appearances.[52]

To be sure there are more questions arising here, concerning both the relation between the events described by natural science and the subjective occurrences, and concerning the rationalizing causal relation claimed to exist between my perception and the worldly facts perceived. Some of these I shall address briefly in the next chapter, where I investigate the possibility of a disjunctivism concerning intentional bodily actions.

[52] A good place to look for a fleshed-out account of first-person authority which I take to be compatible with disjunctivism could be Moran's *Authority and Estrangement* (2001).

CHAPTER 3
DISJUNCTIVISM CONCERNING ACTION

3.1 The idea of disjunctivism concerning intentional bodily action

Parallel to a causal theory of perception which tries to analyse perception in terms of an explanatory prior idea of veridicality-neutral experience and an appropriate causal connection to the perceived object, we find theories of action that try to analyse action as a result of the causal relation between two elements that are themselves independent of one another. On the one side we have a mental item of the agent (a trying, volition, intention etc.) and on the other side we have the movements of the body of the agent. It is when these two elements stand in the appropriate causal relation that we can talk of an intentional action. What such a conjunctivist theory decides to identify as the intentional action can now vary.

One option is to consider the intentional action as identical to bodily movements appropriately caused by a mental item: the Standard Causal Account. Another option is to regard a mental trying whenever it has the proper causal effects as constituting the intentional action: Volitionism. The third of the standard options is to conceive of the intentional action as a complex of both a mental and a physical element and so identify the action with the two components when appropriately linked causally: the Complex Theory. In the literature we find all three proposals present.[53] In the following I shall refer to the kind of bodily movements that, according to all three proposals, are essential for the performance of intentional bodily movements as voluntary movement. The three different theories respectively regard the relationship between movement and action as one of identity, as a relation between cause and effect, and finally, in the case of the Complex Theory, as a part-whole relationship (cf. Hornsby 1998, p. 96). What the three proposals share is the idea that the mental side and the bodily side of an action can exist independently of one another and are only externally related as cause and effect. This means that we find an analogy to the common kind assumption concerning perceptual experience both concerning the mental and concerning the physical element of an action.

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[53] Davidson is a prominent proponent of a version of the Standard Causal Account. The early Hornsby (1980), O'Shaughnessy (1973) and A. D. Smith (1988) have presented versions of Volitionism. McGinn (1982) and Searle (1983) argue for versions of The Complex Theory.

Concerning the mental side, the non-disjunctivist claims that the trying or the intention in action of the agent are of fundamentally the same kind whether the agent actually engages in any bodily activity or not. Here we find the analogy between the case of a perfect hallucination and the case of total failure of acting.

Concerning the physical side of the action, the non-disjunctivist claims that the bodily movement which is essential for the carrying out of an intentional bodily action is of a kind that is not fundamentally different from a movement of the agent's body that occurs without being a movement on behalf of the agent. The non-disjunctivist claims that we can understand what it means that a movement is the movement of an agent by appealing to an agency-neutral concept of bodily movements and further by appealing to the notion of a trying or an intention that causes the bodily movement in the appropriate manner. O'Shaughnessy formulates the basic non-disjunctivist assumptions in the following manner:

> Thus, in normally raising an arm, two distinct events simultaneously happen: one active and psychological, a trying event; the other a merely physical event of a kind that might instead have been caused by no more than a shove, an arm-rising event. (O'Shaughnessy 1973, p. 374).

Because the non-disjunctivist accounts of action involve these two common kind assumptions, we have from the outset two ways of formulating a disjunctivist account of intentional action. On the one hand, we could say that whenever there is a trying, such a trying is either an intentional bodily action or it is a mere trying. On the other hand, we could say that whenever the body of person moves, this movement is either an intentional bodily action or it is a mere movement. The first approach is taken by Bill Brewer. The second approach is pursued by Adrian Haddock in his critique of Hornsby's theory of action. Brewer formulates the disjunction concerning an agent's willing of movement of a limb ('*l*-movement') as follows:

> The basic idea in our connection, would be that cases of *A*'s willing *l*-movement also fall into two psychologically distinct classes, and should not be thought of simply as different worldly embeddings of the very same *w*-type mental state. They are either cases of *A*'s actively moving, or merely her failed attempts of *l*-movement. (Brewer 1993, p. 306).

Here is how Haddock formulates the disjunctivism concerning movements of a person's body:

> This ambition will be thwarted if we take the idea of bodily movement disjunctively, such that the fact that Jane's body moves is constituted either by the fact that Jane moves her body (a physical action) or by the fact that Jane's body merely moves (a mere movement and therefore not an action). (Haddock 2005, p. 163).

Both Brewer and Haddock develop their disjunctivist account of action in analogy to the disjunctivism found in theories of perception, in particular the disjunctivism of McDowell. Haddock refers to McDowell's suggestive remarks in *Mind and World* about a problem of agency paralleling the transcendental problem of perception. The positive proposal McDowell makes is, according to Haddock, 'an account according to which "certain bodily goings-on" *are* physical actions and not merely their effects' (Haddock 2005, p. 161). In fact what McDowell writes is that 'certain bodily goings-on *are* our spontaneity in action, not just effects of it' (MW, p. 91). The problem concerning perception was to see how spontaneity, understood as the conceptual capacities that enable us to think, could be anything but externally related to the operations of our sensibility (MW, p. 89). The problem concerning agency is to come to see how spontaneity, now understood as the conceptual capacities that allow us to form intentions, can be intrinsically involved in movements of the body and not just 'pictured as initiating bodily goings-on from within, and taken on that ground to be recognizable as intentions or volitions' (MW, p. 90). So when McDowell talks about 'spontaneity in action' it seems reasonable to take that as synonymous with 'intention in action' and so to take McDowell's suggestion to be that we should not conceive of 'intention in action' as merely causally related to bodily movements but rather as inextricably implicated in the bodily movement itself. As such McDowell's suggestion seems to imply a kind of movement-disjunctivism such as that developed by Haddock, as well as a disjunctivism of intention in action similar to what Brewer proposes concerning willing.

If we conceive of the notion of bodily movements as referring to a fundamental kind and so think we can and should conceive of all bodily movements as on a par, we can seem to be driven towards a conception of tryings as inner items. Similarly it can seem that once we accept that tryings are independent of any movement

we are forced to accept that the bodily movements must be independent of the tryings and so buy into the common kind assumption concerning movements. Both of these seeming implications have been rejected as more than seeming. A way of combining a disjunctivism of trying with a non-disjunctivism of movement has been proposed by A. D. Smith. Jennifer Hornsby has argued for a position combining a uniform conception of tryings with a disjunctivism of movements. If we can make sense of these combinations it follows that accepting a uniform conception of bodily movement is neither sufficient nor necessary for accepting a uniform conception of trying. I shall return to these questions of mutual implication in section 3.6 and 3.7 below.

3.2 The idea of a disjunctivism of bodily movement

Let us begin by looking at movement-disjunctivism. What can seem peculiar about such a disjunctivism of movement is that it is the bodily movement that is the analogue of the perceptual experience and it is the agent who is the analogue of the mind-independent object of perception. Parallel to the argument that a relational account of perception can capture the naïve realistic phenomenology of perception we find the argument that we need a disjunctivism of movement to capture the phenomenology of voluntary movement. In perception it seems as if we are presented with an object *in propria persona* and so directly experience the object. Similarly we experience moving our body directly, that is, without us having to perform any action in order to get our body moving. I am, so to speak, present *in propria persona*, in the movement of my body when I move. Just as for the disjunctivist of perception certain kinds of experiences are essentially object-involving, so for the disjunctivist of movement certain kinds of movements are seen as essentially involving an agent.

The assumption that the disjunctivist rejects is that the bodily movements that occur when we perform bodily actions are agency-neutral. The assumption rejected is that such bodily movements are of a kind that might have occurred even if no voluntary movement had taken place and so no intentional bodily action had been performed. One expression of such an assumption is found in O'Shaughnessy's concept of 'act-neutral physical events' (O'Shaughnessy 1973, p. 374). The assumption is also expressed by A. D. Smith when he says that '"mere" events and movements are two a penny' (Smith 1988, p. 402) and that such movements are of a kind that could be 'brought about with a decerebrated frog and an electric wire' (Smith 1988, p. 414). Searle refers to experiments run by Wilder Penfield in which the motor cortex of the

patient is stimulated so as to cause his hand to move, and argues that in such cases 'we have a bodily movement which may be exactly the same as the bodily movement in an intentional action' (Searle 1983, p.89).[54]

The strongest version of such a uniformism of movement would claim that numerically the same movement as any action-related movement could occur even if no action had taken place. A weaker version is implied in the quote above, where Searle declares that for any action-related movement a qualitatively identical movement could occur. For Searle such objective indistinguishability serves as an argument in favour of an agency-neutral conception of movements, just as the subjective indistinguishability is used to establish the veridicality-neutrality of perceptual experience. Searle's complex theory of action views a bodily action as a complex of an intention and a movement caused by the intention, and regards the movement as something in itself independent of the intention. What is implied in this view is that the bodily movement caused by the intention is of the same fundamental kind as a movement that could occur without it being action-related. In itself, however, such objective, qualitative identity, if it turned out to be the case, would not ensure the agency-neutrality of both movements, unless it has already been decided that all essential aspects of a bodily movement can be captured by the scientific mode of description. The conception of the body which is presupposed by the common kind assumption is the mirror image of the Cartesian picture of the mind as self-transparent. It is the idea of the body as a machine that can be understood without any evocation of terms that presuppose a subject of experience (cf. Hornsby 1997, p. 101).

Even if it turned out that there are certain constant empirical features of voluntary movements which distinguish them from other movements of the body, this would not be crucial evidence against the common kind assumption concerning movements. All the common kind assumption need amount to is that the facts that constitute bodily movements are facts that are in themselves agency-neutral. The fact that such distinguishing features of an instance of a movement could be taken as evidence for the occurrence of an action would not affect the idea that the most fundamental description of the movement is made in psychologically neutral terms. Such movements would be considered movements of fundamentally the same kind as

[54] For a survey of recent authors who ascribe to the idea of agency-neutral movements see Grünbaum (2008b, p. 246, n. 4).

the movements resulting from muscle spasms, triggering of reflexes, from the blow of a heavy gale as well as movements of the body which occur as the intended consequences of one's actions, such as the going up of one's paralysed left arm, resulting from one's lifting it with one's right arm. The movements of the body are taken to be physical events of a kind that are on a par with other physical events, such as earthquakes or the falling of a tree. All such events can be understood by placing them within the realm of law, where events cause events according to nomological laws.

Just as I am describing a fact neutral between being a veridical perception and being a hallucination, according to the common factor view of perception, when I say of a psychological event that it is a perceptual appearance, then I am supposedly identifying an agency-neutral fact when I say of a physical event that it is a movement of a person's body. This identification is not just neutral in the sense that the specifying description given leaves it open whether an action occurred or not, but in the sense that the fact it identifies is alleged to be independent of whether the movement is voluntary or not. In this picture, the movements can only be externally related to the mind. The full consequence of this is that it must be claimed intelligible that, given any agency-involving movement, a movement of fundamentally the same kind and with intrinsically the same objective qualities could have occurred even if the body had been nobody's body. Hornsby sums up the common kind assumption nicely when she writes: 'Bodily movements then come to be assimilated to items which might be there even if there were no persons whose bodies they were movements of' (Hornsby 1998, p. 392). The reciprocal idea concerning perceptual appearances would be the idea that such appearances become items which might be as they are even if there is no external reality which they can make manifest.

It seems to be a truism to claim that every time I move my body there is a movement of my body. So from the fact that I raise my arm we can infer that there is a rising of my arm. We can put the general claim as follows: From any description of a bodily movement using the transitive verb 'X moves Y' follows a description using the intransitive verb 'X's Y moves', where X stands for a person and Y for a body part (Hornsby 1980, ch. 2). What the non-disjunctivist claims is that the intransitive statement is made true by a fact that is independent of the fact that makes the transitive statement true. This means that the basic metaphysical question for a theory of action becomes how we are to relate the event identified by the transitive statement, i.e., the action, with the event identified by the intransitive statement, i.e., the bodily movement

(cf. Ruben 2007, p. 231). Another way of putting this is to say that the non-disjunctivist wants to give a positive answer to the question Wittgenstein posed: 'What is left over if I subtract the fact that my arm goes up from the fact that I raise my arm?' (Wittgenstein 1984, § 621). With regard to perception, the common kind assumption leads to an acknowledgement that it makes sense to ask: 'What is left of my perception if I subtract the fact that there is an actual object which I am seeing?' (cf. Searle 1983, p. 87). The sense-data theorist and the intentionalist give different answers to this question whereby they try to explain what the highest common factor of perceptual appearances consists in and how such appearances manage to make the world present to me when they amount to veridical perception. Similarly the conjunctivist operates with the idea of an independent fact of bodily movement to which we need to add something for that movement to become a manifestation of my agency.

The response of the disjunctivist, in both the case of perception and the case of action, would be that that these attempts of adding up from a neutral starting point are futile, and that, when we realize the heterogeneous nature of the phenomena once thought to be uniform, the intellectual urgency of these specific questions fades away.

The disjunctivist of bodily movements will claim that when I move my body and this moving of my body is not done by performing some other action, as when I move my paralysed left arm with my right arm, then the most basic description of this movement is the intransitive agency-involving one: *He moves his arm*. It will still be maintained that from this statement we can infer that a movement of the body took place (cf. Ruben 2007, p. 241); only the inferred statement is not taken to be true in virtue of an agency-neutral movement. Instead the inferred statement is to be understood disjunctively: Whenever there is a movement of an agent's body *either* the person moves her body *or* there is a mere movement of the body (cf. Haddock 2005, p. 163, Ruben 2007, p. 238).

3.3 A dual conception of bodily movement

But can it really be that when I simply move my body there is no event of a bodily movement that can be explained by natural science? Certainly there is no necessary implication of a mere movement, understood as a movement that is involuntary or non-voluntary, but isn't every voluntary movement an event that can be conceived of as a non-psychological event within a natural scientific framework? At least it seems that,

whenever I move, there is something happening which we could also call a movement and which can be investigated by natural science. If this is the case, then the analogy to a disjunctivism of perception is imperfect on this point. The exclusiveness of the disjunction concerning movements is not of quite the same nature as that concerning perception.

In both Haddock's and Ruben's versions of a disjunctivism of movements, the disjunction is considered to be between, on the one side, movements which are basic bodily actions, and, on the other side, mere movements, and it is thought that every time we have the one kind it is not possible that we can at the same have a movement of the other kind. Haddock says that: 'Sometimes people move their bodies (they engage in physical action), and at other times their bodies move but they do not move them (their bodies merely move)' (Haddock 2005, p. 163). Ruben writes: 'When Nora moves her hand (and not by doing something else), there is in one sense no such event as her hand's moving that occurs. All there is is the action.' (Ruben 2007, p. 236).

There is a different way of understanding a disjunctivism of movements, however. This is not by claiming the mutual exclusion of the happening of two kinds of events, parallel to the idea of a mutual exclusion of two kinds of experiences, one a genuine perception and the other a hallucination, but rather by a claim about both the mutual irreducibility and the lack of identity between two kinds of events. On this view, expressed by Hornsby, the core claim of the disjunctivist is considered to be the thought that there is autonomy of two different ways of individuating events (Hornsby 1997, p. 107).[55] The idea is not that every time you pick out an event of the agency-involving type it is impossible that an event of the agency-neutral kind occurred simultaneously, but rather that by picking out an event of the first kind you are never simultaneously picking out a specific event or series of events of the second kind. In short, what is denied is a scientific monism of events, which claims the identity of all subjectivity-involving events, such as perceptions and actions, with events described in natural

[55] Ruben also formulates his disjunctivism in terms of events (Ruben 2007, p. 237), but he only, at least explicitly, takes the kind of bodily movements which he identifies with basic actions as being of a fundamentally different kind from all other events, whereas for Hornsby, as we shall see, actions are just one amongst many phenomena of the kind that must also include perceptual episodes, episodes of memory and all the other goings-on we understand by placing them in the space of reason. Haddock seems to miss this part of Hornsby's theory when he presents her thought that actions are events as the thought that they are events in Davidson's sense and so occupy a distinct region of space-time (Haddock 2005, p. 158). The Davidsonian individuation would require that, for instance, the event of me saying 'event' must have as distinct location, such as the location my tongue and other speech organs occupied during my vocalization, and this is what Hornsby resists.

scientific terms. Given this understanding we might still express the disjunctivism by saying that, whenever there is movement of an agent's body, either the person moves her body or there is a mere movement of the body. This is not to be read as saying that whenever a limb movement of the one kind occurs it is impossible that a movement of the same limb but of the other kind occurs. Instead it must be understood as a rather awkward expression of the idea that whenever we identify a movement this movement will be of either one or the other kind.

Hornsby regards the division between two kinds of bodily events as an instance of the more general division McDowell makes between what is situated in the space of reasons and that which is placed in the realm of science (cf. Hornsby 1998, p. 397, n. 38): 'Conceiving bodily movements disjunctively, one draws a line between the movements that occur when and because people have reason to do things and the movements of a neutral ontology' (Hornsby 1997, pp. 106-107). Both Ruben and Haddock, as well as Hornsby, would agree that when I move my body while carrying out an intentional, bodily action, such movements are of a different kind than the movements of my body that occur if my arm is lifted by a strong wind or the jerk of my body that can happen just before I fall asleep or if I lift my paralysed arm. But Haddock and Ruben also seem committed to saying that when I perform an intentional action, such as waving at a friend, then no movement of my arm of the kind which takes place in the contrasting cases occurs. There is only one kind of movement-event taking place when I move my hand. We can now ask whether this movement can be given, for instance, a neuro-physiological explanation. If the answer is yes, then that very event is not an event of a fundamentally different kind than the jerk of my body before sleeping, as they can both be identified with events explained in terms that do not presuppose a subject of experience. If the answer is no, then we are forced to introduce an asymmetry between movements involved in intentional actions and other movements which seem purely ideological, as there is no reason why movements of my body should suddenly transcend any neuro-physiological understanding just because I start moving. As Merleau-Ponty writes, opposing a similar division of labour between a physiological and a rational explanation: 'Un geste de tous les jours ne contient-il pas une série de contractions musculaire et d'innervation? Il est donc impossible de limiter l'explication physiologique.' (PP, p. 143). So either we have to give up the disjunctivist account of movements or we have to accept a mysterious kind of movements that elude any kind of scientific elucidation.

The alternative disjunctivist route that I propose consists in saying that when I perform an intentional, bodily action, there are not one but two kinds of movements taking place. There is the kind of movement that takes place because the agent does something for a reason, which we can understand as something that contributes to the achieving of a goal of the agent, and thereby understand as rationalized. Furthermore there is the kind of movement that can be understood in natural scientific terms, which different sciences such as bio-mechanics or neuro-physiology would individuate according to their specific theoretical framework. These fundamentally different kinds of events each have their irreducible form of intelligibility and the items on the one side of the line cannot be identified with items at the other side of the line. This is, I take it, what is involved in Hornsby's disjunctivism of movements. She comes very close to explicitly stating that whenever I move there are at least two movements taking place when she says that a non-disjunctivist assumption often underlies physicalist doctrine, in the form of the assumption that 'there is, as it were, just one bodily movement when there is an action' (Hornsby 1997, p. 107). To say that more than one movement of my arm takes place whenever I move my arm might sound strange, but the idea is that these movements are of two different kinds. This does not imply the absurd idea that the same arm can both move in one direction and at the same time and in the same manner move in another direction. When we identify a movement of the body as caused by a certain brain event, we are not talking about a movement of a kind that essentially involves a living human being, but about movements of the kind that can be produced in a decapitated frog with an electric wire.

Returning to the analogy between action and perception, we can see a new dimension of the analogy. The distinction between the two kinds of movement occurring when there is an intentional bodily action can be seen as parallel to the two kinds of perceptual intake one can talk about whenever a subject perceives. On the one side we have the fact that is made manifest to the subject, for instance, the fact that there is a red cube in front of the subject. On the other side we can investigate the input at a physical or physiological level and attempt to give a natural scientific explanation of vision. To say that a person sees that there is a red cube in front of him is to understand the phenomenon as placed within the space of reasons. To talk about there being a certain brain activity caused by certain stimuli is to talk about phenomena that are understood as located in the realm of science. Part of the motivation for the common kind assumption concerning perception is exactly that the intake of perception is only

considered as events that belong to the sphere of science, which naturally leads to a placing of the experience in the brain. It is argued that, if keeping the immediate input constant can result in subjectively indistinguishable experiences, then the experiences must be independent of any more distant causes. There is a common kind assumption concerning the perceptual intake analogue to the common kind assumption concerning the output of mind in the shape of bodily movements. The common kind assumption concerning perceptual input is the result of the combination of Thesis 1, Experiential Naturalism, and Thesis 3, Scientistic Naturalism, of the pentalemma of *Mind and World*. Both of these common kind assumptions can be seen as motivated by the idea that the intake and the outcome of the mind must be natural phenomena and consequently describable in natural scientific terms. In the case of perception we can combine a disjunctivism of appearances with a dual conception of perceptual intake. In the case of bodily action I have argued that it makes more sense to talk about a dual conception of movement than to talk about a disjunctivism of movement. It is still an open question whether we can make sense of the idea of a disjunctivism of trying or willing in the case of actions.

In the cases of both disjunctivism of perception and the dual conception of movements, these proposals imply a denial of Scientistic Naturalism, i.e., of the need to identify the natural with what can be identified in natural scientific terms. Consequently these positions also reject Davidsonian anomalous monism. More specifically they deny the second premise of Davidson's argument, which McDowell calls the fourth dogma of Empiricism, namely the Principle of the Nomological Character of Causality (McDowell 1998g, p. 340). As argued by Hornsby, we find good reasons for denying the scientific monism of events implied in this conception of causality in two of Davidson's other theses (Hornsby 1997, pp. 137-140). If we accept the Davidsonian idea that that reason-giving explanation is causal explanation and accept the anomalism of the mental, then we have good reasons for rejecting a scientific monism of events. A reason-giving explanation is irreducible to a purely causal explanation because it makes, for instance, intentional actions intelligible by regarding them as at least to some extent governed by norms of rationality. We explain intentional actions by citing psychological items in the light of which we can see how acting in the way explained would have struck the agent as in some way rational (cf. McDowell 1998e, p. 66). Why should we believe that the perceptions, the beliefs, the desires and other mental items

we might refer to in such explanations are identical to events or states that can be identified in purely natural scientific terms?

Given that the reason-giving explanation is irreducible to any purely causal explanation, the fact that the explanation in question is recognized as causal does not provide a reason for a scientific monism. What justifies an acceptance of a reason-giving explanation is that it reveals a rational pattern in the behaviour. This contrasts with what, according to Davidson, justifies acceptance of a singular merely causal statement, namely an appeal to generalizations that can serve as evidence for the existence of a causal law covering the case at hand. An example of such a generalization is: "Windows are fragile, and fragile things tend to break when struck hard enough, other conditions being right" (Davidson 1980a, p. 16). In so far as what is distinctive about reason-giving explanations is that they explain by appeal to rational norms, in contrast to an appeal to knowledge of what tends to happen, the analogy between the window case and the case of intentional action seems to break down. Instead of thinking that the cases explained by reasons must, just like the window case, be cases that under another description fall under a nomological law, it seems more reasonable to conclude that the reason-giving explanations are explanations of occurrences that are of a fundamentally different kind than the events of natural science. What we get is a general dual conception of events.[56]

There are still many issues that need to be resolved in order to evaluate the full scope of such a dual conception of events.[57] One issue is how to specify the non-Humean notion of causality at play in the dual conception version of the idea that reason-giving explanations are causal explanations. Hornsby argues that what we rely on in such explanations is a network of empirical interdependencies that are recorded in counterfactuals such as, "If she had not wanted X she would not have done Y" (Hornsby 1997, pp. 135, 242, n. 5). Such a conception opens up the possibility that factors such as "X did not believe that P" can enter into the causal explanation, though

[56]McDowell, just like Hornsby, regards it as a prejudice that citing causes can only be explanatory by exploiting the possibility that the effects of such causes can also be given a merely causal, nomological explanation (McDowell 1998g, p. 335). He further argues that Davidson's dissolution of the dualism of schema and content undermines the reasons for thinking that singular causal relations are unperceivable and that we therefore need to understand all causality in terms of regularity (McDowell 1998g, p. 340).

[57] Brewer discusses which notion of supervenience could be combined with what he terms Hornsby's conceptual realism, a realism he takes to reinforce his own disjunctivism of willing (Brewer 1993, p. 311).

they are not identifiable as particulars and the conception seems compatible with a general interventionist account of causality (cf. Woodward 2003).

Another issue is why the dual conception does not inherit the difficulties of a Cartesian dualism of substances and is consequently faced with the problem of making the first premise of Davidson's argument for his monism intelligible, i.e., the Principle of Causal Interaction between the mental and the physical. A first step in an answer to such a concern would be to point out that a distinction between two fundamentally different kinds of events does not amount to a dualism of substances (cf. Hornsby 1997, p. 76; McDowell 1998g, p. 339). We might still hold on to a version of materialism and claim that thinking and acting persons do not consist of anything but matter, though they can participate in occurrences that cannot be explained by natural science.

To be sure, the introduction of a dual conception of events does not eliminate all motivation for philosophical pondering about how a conception of rational agency is compatible with the conception of nature expressed by science. It does however strike me as having the advantage of avoiding some fundamental problems that arise if we assume Scientistic Naturalism. Putting these further issues aside, I shall now turn to a more specific analysis of the way the common kind assumption concerning movement risks leading us into a philosophical deadlock of a kind similar to the one McDowell found in the unsettling oscillation between Coherentism and the Myth of the Given.

3.4 The Standard Causal Account: An alien body

I think there are good reasons supporting a strong suspicion that, as long as we take an agency-neutral notion of bodily movements as our basic notion of bodily movements, we end up with an alienating picture of ourselves as agents because we will picture ourselves as alienated from our bodies. To support this suspicion, let me begin by looking at the Standard Causal account. Such an account will typically identify the action with a bodily movement and claim that a movement is an action due to it being caused in the right way by a belief-desire pair, an intention or some other mental item (I shall term it 'intention' in what follows). Whichever intentional bodily action I perform, what I actually do merely amounts to moving my body and after that, as Davidson puts it, the rest is up to nature (Davidson 1980, p. 59). Nature is here understood as chains of causal events placed in the realm of science and the action as just one event amongst

others in this realm. The basic problem with this picture is that it seems to undermine the very idea of the agent having a capacity to move her body.

The motivation for identifying our actions with our movements seems to be that only these bodily movements are ones that I can perform without first doing something else, which in turn causes a further event over which I have no direct control. After the performance of my movements, the outcome is so to speak out of my hands. If I am sawing down a tree, just as I can only indirectly make the tree fall by sawing the trunk, I can only indirectly make the saw move by moving my body appropriately. My causal power to move my body, however, must on this conception consist in the causal power of my intentions, which to have such powers must be identified with an item that can be described in non-intentional terms. The assumption here is that for the intention to be causally efficacious it must be possible to redescribe it in natural-scientific terms, because only such descriptions are revelatory of *the* causal nexus amongst the phenomena *qua* natural phenomena (cf. McDowell 2006a, p. 69). The intention is under this assumption likely to be identified with a brain event of some kind. As it is assumed that a bodily movement qualifies as an action due to its having a mental cause of the right kind in the right way and that the bodily movement is intrinsically agency-neutral, the intentions presumably are be identified with the brain event that causes the bodily movement. But taking the perspective of natural science, the brain-event and the bodily movement are, of course, not directly causally linked, it is only due to events in between the brain event and the bodily movement that we can succeed in making the arm move.

The question is now in what sense I can still be claimed to possess a capacity to move my arm. If the reason the scope of my action was in the first place narrowed down to my bodily movement was that what lies beyond this boundary is dependent on happenings that are beyond my control then we might ask if this is not also true of my bodily movements. Just like the falling of the tree, my bodily movements are caused by some events further upstream the causal flux, say, muscle contractions and these in turn by some brain event, so if the most basic action is the one we can perform without first making another event happen, it cannot after all be identified with our bodily movements. In this picture, my power as an agent must reside in the causal power of my intention *qua* brain event, because all causation must be explicable by natural science. The consequence is that my actual power is limited to bringing about the most proximate effect of the brain-event, identified as my intention; after that the rest is up to nature. This is an alienating picture of how we relate to our

own bodies because we have introduced basic actions which I basically do not know how to perform. My true sphere of influence is restricted to the immediate environment of my brain, which, to use an expression of Hornsby's, is not the world we know and inhabit as agents (Hornsby 2004b, p. 177). I cannot normally make the brain events required for the raising of my arm happen except by exactly raising my arm. Unlike the case of cutting down the tree, where it makes sense to say that I intend to make the tree fall, because I know how to saw the trunk, there is in this picture no capacity of mine that I can point to which can make sense of my intention to move my body. If I cannot directly move my arm, I must be ascribed knowledge of how to perform a more basic action by means of which I can achieve my aim of moving my arm, otherwise we cannot make it intelligible that I can, though indirectly, still intentionally move my arm. Such knowledge is exactly what I don't have, and don't need to have, of the most immediate consequence of certain brain events.

The grounds for ascribing teleologically basic practical abilities by which it makes sense to see my movements as expressive of my agency *qua* rational agent has been undermined. My practical capacity to perform bodily action is divided into a rational capacity to intend and the causal efficacy of my intention working at a sub-personal level over which I have no rational control. We have no means by which we can make it intelligible that my intention can actually lead me to get the thing in question done. What we are left with is a picture of how I move my body which is like the picture of someone who can make a tree fall just by intending it to fall; my body becomes an alien object that I can only move from a distance in a sort of telekinetic act.[58] Even if we could make intelligible the possibility of a creature with a perceptual access to the world like ours but whose agency was completely disengaged from bodily capacities this would not help make our own embodied position in the world comprehensible.[59] The point is not that the ascription of telekinetic powers is in itself

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[58] This line of argument draws heavily on Hornsby's way of arguing for the alienating character of the picture in question (Hornsby 1998, pp. 388-89, Hornsby 2004a, 2004b). Hornsby borrows the image of telekinetic powers from Bernhard Williams account of Descartes' mind-body problem (Hornsby 1998, p. 389). McDowell indicates a comparable line of argument against the functionalism of Loar, which drives the explanandum of psychological explanations inwards and "away from the agent's involvement with the world" (McDowell 1998g, p. 333). Hornsby pursues a similar argument against a functionalist conception of the mental (1997, p. 114).

[59] McDowell seems to allude to the idea of such a creature, when he mentions the idea of an agent who has no concept of means by which something can get done, but only possesses the concept-schema '*bringing it about..*'(McDowell 1998f, p. 170, n. 9). The allusion appears in the context of the discussion of the possibility of a completely passive yet rational wolf that I mentioned in the *Introduction*.

contradictory. The point is that if an account of how our motility can be both natural and what grounds the way we can perform intentional bodily actions ends up picturing our powers as agents as super-natural telekinetic powers then it has failed.

In the paper in which Davidson claims that nothing stands in the way of saying that bodily movements are our most basic actions he in fact admits that such movements are not our basic action. Davidson argues that we are always aware of our bodily movements under some description. When tying my shoelaces for instance, I am aware of moving my fingers in the manner required for me to tie my shoelaces (Davidson 1980, p. 53). However he goes further and says that I intentionally do something in order to make my fingers move in the required manner. The brain events and muscle contractions that cause my finger movements are intentional under the description 'doing with my body whatever it takes to move my fingers in the required way' (cf. Davidson 1980, p. 50). Such events would according to Davidson be identical to my moving my fingers (Davidson 1980, p. 54) and as a consequence we can say that it is my moving my fingers that cause the movements of my fingers and these movements are not after all my most basic action. This approach does not require that we know in any details how our fingers move or which events make them move as we can know them under a description that refers to them in terms of their effects.

We may wonder whether the possibility of such 'thin' knowledge of precisely the relevant subpersonal events is overlooked in the argument above. To see why this is not the case we merely have to ask what good this knowledge could do the agent in her practical reasoning about the means to achieve her ends. The action described as 'doing what it takes with my body to move my fingers' is not under normal circumstances a description of an action that is basic from the agent's point of view qua agent. It is not a teleological basic action. If however the ascription of such knowledge is to do us any good in making sense of the agent's ability to move her body, then the more basic action cannot just be causally more basic. The action needs to be one the agent not only can know about when it takes place but one she knows how to perform. Again, the only way we can normally do whatever it takes to move our fingers is by moving our fingers. If it is to make sense that moving our fingers can be a teleologically basic action we need to possess the ability to move them. In the picture in question such an ability can only consist in the ability of our intentions to initiate a causal chain of which we normally have no specific knowledge and of which more knowledge would be of no practical use to us as agents.

3.5 Volitionism: An idle trying

One diagnosis of the difficulties of the Standard Causal Account would be to say that the problem arises because we are attempting to identify our actions with items in the world that do not in themselves involve any agency, namely our bodily movements. Keeping the premise that such movements are agency-neutral, one answer to the difficulties would be to identify our actions with the mental item which sets in motion the causal chain instead of pursuing the unpromising attempt to track down the action as a specific link in the chain. This is the response of Volitionism or the so called Trying theories.[60] It has been argued that such a theory is the logical conclusion of a search for the locus of agency that begins with the proposal that all we ever do is to move our bodies. In what follows I shall present one such argument as put forward by A. D. Smith (Smith 1988).

The guiding intuition behind the claim of identity of movements and action is that when, for instance, I switch on the light, all I need to do is to move my finger in the appropriate way. The description of my action as a turning on of the light cannot be a description that captures an essential feature of what I do in that situation, since for all I do the light might as well not have come on. A power cut, for instance, might have prevented my action from being a turning on of the light. The guiding intuition can be spelled out as the assumption that in order for a description of an action to be of an essential feature of the event *qua* action the truth of the description must be independent of any conditions which are not entirely dependent on the activity of the agent (Smith 1988, p. 405).[61] The search for an essential description of the action which is agency-revealing[62], is tantamount to a search for the causally most basic description of an action. To see this we first have to gain a more precise understanding of the notion of causally basicness.

We can define the causally most basic description of an action via the notion of an *indicated event* (cf. Smith 1988, p. 404). An indicated event is an event that

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[60] I shall focus on the Trying-Theories in the following. The Trying-Theories belong to the group of theories sometimes referred to as New Volitionism. Since O'Shaughnessy's paper *Trying (as the mental "pineal gland")* from 1973 a number of writers have revived the volitional account, for an overview see Grünbaum (2008a).

[61] We need the formulation via double negation ("*in*dependent of factors *not* dependent on") in order to avoid that dependence on physical events that are identical to or on which the intention supervenes will be included amongst the dependencies that rule out an action-characterization as essential. Such exclusion would leave us requiring a substance-dualism to substantiate any characterizations as essential.

[62] We need the term "Agency-revealing description" because if the action is identified with a certain physical event, there will also be essential descriptions not expressive of agency.

is both semantically indicated by an action description and agency-neutral. An example: 'She pushes the boat' is a transitive action description that contains the indicated event characterized by the intransitive expression 'the movement of the boat'. The truth of a statement about the happening of a semantically-indicated event is entailed by the action description containing the event, though not all statements that follow from such descriptions will be about the indicated events.[63] We can now define a causally non-basic description:

Definition of causally non-basic action descriptions

A description *D* of an action is non-basic if an only if there is some (true) description *D1* of that action such the indicated event of *D1* caused the indicated event of *D*

The description 'She pushes the boat' is accordingly non-basic. The action of pushing can also be described by 'She moves her body' and this description contains the indicated event movements of her body which describes the event causing the event of the movements of the boat indicated by the action description 'she pushes the boat'. We can now define a basic action description in terms of the foregoing definition:

Definition of causally basic action descriptions

A description *D* of an action is basic if and only if there is no such description *D1*.

The search for an essential characterization of actions the truth of which is independent of any factors that are not entirely dependent on the activity of the agent can now be recognized as the search for a causally basic description. A non-basic description is a description in terms of causal consequences and as such it will always rely on the obtaining of certain further facts independent of the activity of the agent. My switching on of the light depends on the power supply. In general, all effects of what my action are in this picture, as Smith has it, ´"mere events" fully accounted for by the laws of

[63] The term 'semantical indication' is used here in order to separate the kind of containment in question from logical implication (formal or material) (cf. Smith 1988, p. 404, n. 5, see also Enç 2003, p. 9).Usually a non-basic action description will entail statements about more events than the one indicated in the description. I follow Hornsby and Smith in taking the notion to be sufficiently clear to make the relevant point (cf. Hornsby 1980, p. 70).

nature and antecedent conditions that can be understood purely physically' (Smith 1988, p. 406).

The drift we saw in Davidson's agency-paper can now be seen as a first step in the interiorization of the essentially agency-involving event. The characterization 'doing with my body whatever it takes to make my fingers move' cannot be maintained as a basic description if it is thought of as a description of certain cerebral events and muscle contractions. Just as a power failure might hinder the turning on of the light we can imagine a sudden, unanticipated paralysis which sets in just when the agent is about to move her finger and cuts of the efferent signals. The logical consequence is that there must be a more basic description, which could be given the admittedly odd phrasing, 'I did what I could to do with my body whatever it takes to make my finger move'. The claim of the Trying-theorist is now that a better phrasing of a description which is causally basic is simply to say: 'I tried to move my finger'. The trying-theorist will claim that such a description has no semantically indicated event, because it does not follow from the statement that there was a movement of my finger. According to the definitions above we have found the causally most basic description and thereby located an event that is essentially agency-involving. We now have the conclusion that the mental trying that initiates the bodily movement is the event which should be identified as our action With Smith's radicalized version of Davidson's thesis the conclusion sounds: 'all we ever do is try, the rest is up to nature' (Smith 1988, p. 421).

This interiorization of the action cannot, however, overcome the fundamental difficulty of the Standard Causal Account which was the incompatibility between what the actual power of the agent amounts to in this picture and the ascriptions of intentions. In the account of the Trying theory, the power of the agent is no longer to be identified with the causal power of the intention or the trying, because even this power relies on something which is beyond the activity of the agent. In this picture, the agent still has no hold on the ability of her body to move. By placing the realm of agency within the realm of the mental, the Trying theorist argues that she can avoid a reduction of agency to a causal relation between two in themselves passive occurrences. There is a question about whether the arguments for the isolation of the realm of agency commit the theory to the claim that in all actions we are trying to move our body. But even if the Trying theory is entitled to hold on to the idea that what we try can be something which is at a distance from our bodily movements, the basic problem remains. If we ascribe tryings to the agent with the content 'to push the boat', such a

trying cannot make sense unless the agent actually has a capacity to push, but such a bodily capacity of the agent is not to be found anywhere in this picture. The agent is merely ascribed the capacity to try, and whether this mental trying actually results in the intended result is entirely up to the world. With regard to the success or failure of our tryings, we are left out of the picture.

The interiorization of the agent's practical capacities can be seen as the ultimate consequence of the idea that we need to eliminate any reliance on luck and have to establish our agency in a sphere under our absolute control. An idea which, as McDowell points out, is parallel to the idea that in order to achieve a cognitive contact with the world we need a starting point which we can establish 'by our own unaided resources, without needing the world to do us favours' (McDowell 1998c, p. 396). The paradoxical consequence is that even the most minimal success in the shape of a single causal consequence of what we do will be nothing but a stroke of luck.

How are we to make it intelligible that we have the ability to perform bodily intentional actions, if all we have as agents is what we might call a *mere capacity* (cf. Brewer 1993, p. 308), the exercise of which is completely independent of any actual success? The situation is similar to the situation of a conjunctivist position concerning perception, which claims that the exercise of the ability to know how things appear to one can be made intelligible independently of any reference to a possible exercise of a capacity to tell how things actually are by having a perceptual appearance. The Trying-Theory must claim that what makes a mere trying a possible way of achieving something in the world is its conjunction with the merely causal capacities of the body. The trying is conceived as autonomous in relation to any actual bodily movements and the movements are conceived as essentially agency-neutral occurrences. Now it can either be said that a trying is only an intentional action in case it is minimally successful or it can be said that all tryings constitute intentional actions. The consequence of the first position is that no action is essentially an action as it could have been a mere trying (cf. Smith 1988, p. 413). The consequence of the latter position is that an intentional bodily action such as raising one's arm does not essentially involve any movements of one's arm, i.e. numerically the same action could have occurred without being accompanied by the movement (cf. Smith 1988, p. 421, n. 22). Independently of which position is chosen the basic problem is the same. The problem is that we are supposed to construct something that is recognizable as basic practical capacities out of the

conjunction of mere tryings and mere causal relations between parts of the body as understood by natural science.

The problem is to understand how my trying to do a specific thing can turn out to actually make that thing happen, if the trying is only externally related to the parts of my body that physically surround my brain. There is nothing in my trying *qua* trying, i.e. in the content of the trying that can help explain how it can set exactly the needed neuro-physiological processes in motion. If we accept the thesis of the Anomalism of the Mental, then there can be no psycho-physical laws which we can rely on in order to build up our confidence in our capacity to get things done by trying. Even if such laws were possible they would not usually be available to the agent. The agent's teleologically basic practical concepts and her means-end knowledge would be removed from what really constitutes her practical capacities and it would from her perspective be purely accidental that her basic tryings could make what she strives for happen.

Of course we normally do experience things to go our way again and again when it comes to our teleologically most basic actions. However, the problem is how we can, within the framework in question, make it intelligible that such successful intentional bodily actions are even possible. From within this theoretical perspective we seem to be forced to declare that in acting we simply rely on pure luck, alternatively we might appeal to some benevolent super-natural power that in ways unknown to us ensures our successes.

As Hornsby points out Hume raised an apposite question concerning the consequences of what is in effect a scientific monism of bodily movements (Hornsby 2004b, p. 176):

> How indeed can we be conscious of a power to move our limbs when *we have no such power*, but *only* that to move certain animal spirits which, though they produce at last the motion of limbs, yet operate in such a manner as is wholly beyond our comprehension? (Hume 1748/ 2000, §7, pt. I).

Here the basic problem of the agency-neutral conception of bodily motility is pinpointed. The problem is that we take the power to move out of the hands of the agent when we think it can be left up to science to explain the motility that is a necessary ingredient in our concept of bodily actions. If we cannot make sense of our possession of basic practical capacities as bodily we risk undermining the very idea that we can try or intend to perform bodily actions. We have violated the intuitive constraint on

ascriptions of intention that I formulated as Minimal Pragmatism. In Hornsby's words we have created a picture of ourselves as alienated from our bodies in a way that is *unthinkable* (Hornsby 2004b, p. 174)

It does not make sense to say that someone intentionally won the lottery. If asked what I am doing I might say that I am trying to win the lottery again, but this only makes sense because I can intentionally buy a ticket. Something that happens entirely by chance cannot be something I can intend to do or something I can try to do in the sense of the Trying-Theory (cf. Smith 1988, p. 411). In the picture of the Trying-Theory it seems that exactly because all we have as agents are *mere capacities* we must rely entirely on luck when it comes to the execution of actions. The consequence is that the residual idea that at least we can try becomes obscure. If it is not intelligible how at least sometimes trying can be our getting something done in the world we seem to loose track of ourselves as even possible agents in the world.

The Trying-Theory's withdrawel of the locus of agency from any actual consequences runs parallel with the interiorization of belief justification that Coherentism takes to be the correct response to the revelation of the Myth of the Given. In the case of Coherentism the world is left out of the picture when it comes to the justification of our beliefs, because it is realized that no merely causal ancestor of our belief can serve as anything but exculpation. In the case of the Trying Theory the agent is left out of the picture when it comes to anything that happens beyond his inner trying, because it is realized that merely having a mental item as a causal ancestor is not enough to make the bodily movement anything but a mere happening. On this picture our tryings will remain in Anscombe's happy phrasing 'a bombination in a vacuum' (Anscombe 2000, p. 52), an idling analogue to the spinning in the void of Coherentism. For the proponent of the Standard Causal Account this will be taken as evidence that we need to identify the action with something external to the mental item in order to secure the power of the agent to make something happen in the world, but as we have already seen, the prospects of such relocation do not seem any more promising.

The point of the critique above is not just that we have an actual power to make things happen in the world which is denied by the Trying theory, just as the point of the critique of Coherentism is not that we are denied a justification via perception which we actually have. The point is that if we do not allow for the possibility of such a bodily power, we undermine the very idea of ourselves as intentional, bodily agents; we lose our grip on the notion of intending or willing something. At this fundamental level,

the critique of both the Standard Causal Account and the Trying theory is the same, just as is the case with the critique of Coherentism and the Myth of the Given. In the picture of perceptual intake that shapes the debate between the Myth of the Given and Coherentism, our perception can, as McDowell, agreeing with Dennett, puts it, at best be a sort of premonition (MW, p. 12, 1998h, p. 342). At best, because even to talk about a premonition requires that we can make sense of the idea that the premonition has representational content, and this is precisely what McDowell is contesting. By analogy McDowell says that our intentions can at best be an intending directed at our bodies as from a distance; at best, because really we are losing our grip on the very notion of willing once the body is put at a distance from our intentions (MW, p. 91).

I have tried to spell out the way the common kind assumption concerning movements undermines the very idea of bodily agency by exposing it as leaving us at the most with a picture of the agent as possessing a sort of telekinetic ability to move her body. To do so I have tried to show how a dialectic between the Standard Causal Account and Trying theory is the result of the common kind assumption.[64] So far I have only marginally discussed the other side of the dual common kind assumption concerning action, namely the common kind assumption concerning the mental item involved in bodily actions. Therefore it is still an open question to what extent the kind of movement-disjunctivism I have been putting forward is committed to what has been called a disjunctivism of tryings, and furthermore if a disjunctivism of tryings is committed to a dual conception of bodily movements.

3.6 A disjunctivism of trying

The two common kind assumptions concerning actions serve to support one another, but so far I have left it an open question to what extent an undermining of the one necessarily leads to the collapse of the other. In fact we do find authors arguing in favour of a kind of disjunctivism of trying combined with the common kind assumption concerning movement. Further we shall see that Hornsby, after her rejection of such a common kind assumption, maintains that we need a uniform conception of trying. I have already argued against a Trying Theory based on the common kind assumption

[64] I have not touched upon why a Complex Theory of Action, which identifies the action with a complex of both a mental and bodily event, should meet similar difficulties given the common kind assumption concerning movements. To come closer to establishing the thesis that it is in fact the common kind assumption which is the source of the problem, such a discussion would be needed.

concerning movement, and I shall argue that the attempt to supplement such theories with a kind of disjunctivism of trying cannot compensate for the fundamental problems of such theories. Furthermore I shall argue that Hornsby's attempt to distance her dual conception of movement from a disjunctivism of trying is not convincing and that even if we accept her arguments we still have reasons to uphold a disjunctivism of trying. In sum I argue that the dual conception of movements supports an embodied account of minimally successful tryings and thereby what we can call a disjunctive account of trying.

As we saw above, an Argument from Sudden Paralysis functions as an analogue to the Argument from Hallucination in the attempt to show that our tryings can be isolated as inner autonomous mental events. The argument begins with the claim that in such cases of total failure we must admit that the agent is still trying to move his hand, just as the Argument from Hallucination starts out by establishing that in the case of an indistinguishable hallucinatory experience such an experience must be counted as a perceptual appearance. In order to establish that we can correctly describe all instances of intentional actions as instances of tryings, the Trying Theory needs a further argument, which is often given in the shape of a certain Gricean argument.

Under many circumstances, it would seem odd for an agent to answer an Anscombian 'Why?' question with 'I am trying to X'. Such an answer seems appropriate in cases where we are not certain that we can succeed but not in cases where we can skilfully and without any particular effort perform a habitual action, such as tying our shoelaces. The Gricean argument is an argument to the effect that we are entitled to the claim that all intentional actions can be re-described in terms of trying, and furthermore that such descriptions refer to facts the obtaining of which is independent of whether an utterance of the description would be pragmatically inappropriate.[65] In short the argument is the following. In all cases of intentional action we can imagine a spectator who has reasons to believe that the agent will not succeed and for whom it is therefore perfectly appropriate to state that the agent is going to or is already trying to X. The claim is now that, even in cases where the spectator is wrong in her predictions and the action is carried out without any trouble, she can still maintain

[65] The argument is found in Grice (1989 [1967], ch. 1). Similar arguments are found in several authors including O'Shaughnessy (1973), Hornsby (1980, ch. 3), McGinn (1982, ch. 5) and Smith (1988, p. 410). For a survey of further literature dealing with the argument see Grünbaum (2008, p. 69, n. 1).

that at least she knew that the agent would try to X. It is further claimed that what the spectator possessed was true knowledge about the agent that could be possessed even by a spectator or the agent herself who did not have any doubts concerning the agent's execution or her intention. Trying-statements are claimed to be parallel with statements like, 'The Prime Minister is not high on drugs today'. Such a statement does carry the pragmatic implication that the prime minister is sometimes high on drugs, but even if he never is, the statement would still be true.

The Gricean argument only establishes that in each case where an agent is intentionally X-ing we can truthfully say that the agent is trying to X. As such the argument does not carry the metaphysical weight that the Trying Theory attempts to lift, namely that what we identify in each case is a movement-independent inner mental event (cf. Grünbaum 2008a, p. 69). The Gricean argument is the counterpart of an argument to the effect that even in cases of veridical perception it makes sense to say that the perceiver has an appearance of things being thus and so, though the perceiver might not herself doubt that she is actually seeing that things are thus and so. Recognition of such omni-applicability of appearance descriptions is nothing but recognition of the fact that perception is not flawless. Similarly the corresponding the Gricean argument trades on the fact that we only have limited powers as agents and therefore can never ultimately free ourselves of any risk of failure. The fact that in each case of success it is conceivable that we could have failed does not show that what we actually did only amounts to what we would have done had we failed. To reach such a conclusion we need to assume an agency-neutral conception of the bodily movements involved in the minimally successful trying in order to drive back the trying into the brain. As we saw above, Smith's version of the Argument from Total Failure is explicitly worked out under the presumption that movements are agency-neutral. Given the cogency of the Gricean argument and the Common Kind Assumption, the Argument from Sudden Paralysis could appear to take us some distance towards establishing the conclusion that all we ever do is try and that such trying is independent of any bodily movement.

However, the Argument from Sudden Paralysis cannot, in contrast to the Argument from Hallucination, be based on the idea of subjective indistinguishability, which in the case of trying should exist between the ordinary trying and the trying of the unsuspecting subject who is overcome with sudden paralysis the instant she tries. As Smith admits, the agent who is paralysed will not try in the same way an un-paralysed

person would have tried as she will immediately become aware of her unusual situation (Smith 1988, p. 407). If the trying which supposedly causes our bodily movements when we are intentionally acting is identified with the mental occurrence isolated in the case of sudden paralysis, the Trying Theory would leave the agent absurdly superfluous during the actual carrying out of the movement. The agent would only be able to control the movement by intervening with a new trying on the basis of her proprioceptive or exteroceptive feedback concerning the course of the movement. Such a picture of our intentional bodily actions seems incapable of capturing the phenomenology of performing teleologically basic actions, such as grasping a cup, in which we have a continuous sense of agency during the performance.[66]

Smith suggests that the Argument of Sudden Paralysis can be supplemented by extending the thought experiment. In the extended scenario, the manipulative neuro-scientist not only hinders the actual movement, she also stimulates the brain of the agent directly so that the subject will enjoy the same kind of feedback she would have enjoyed had she actually moved her hand (cf. Smith 1988, p. 408).[67] We can take the idea one step further and at least pretend that we can make sense of the scenario where our brain is placed in a vat and hooked up so as to give us the impression of perceiving and acting in a world indistinguishable from our present world (cf. Dokic 1993, p. 258). It is at this point that the possibility of version Volitionism shows up, which tries to accommodate the idea that our most basic tryings must be world-involving. I shall present two such attempts and argue that they remain trapped in what we might call the Myth of the Fiat, i.e., the idea that we can make sense of the mind's capacity to intend, try or will without any reference to a rational, bodily capacity to move.

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[66] Grünbaum argues that the Argument from Total Failure is in even worse trouble as it cannot, in the case of paralysis, give content to a distinction between idle trying wishing, such as a "basic trying" to make one's ear point in the direction of a sound, and effectively trying to move but with no effect. Consequently the theory loses any grip on the notion of trying as this notion was supposed to be based on the intelligibility of the trying in the case of the paralysis (Grünbaum 2008a, pp. 69-73). I think this is correct and that it expresses the fact that we cannot make sense of the idea of a trying without presupposing a capacity to move that is inherently bodily, if we try to do so Minimal Pragmatism is undermined.

[67] Apart from such thought experiments, some authors refer to the case of Landry's patient, described by James in order to establish the movement independence of the trying (Hornsby 1980, pp. 40-44, Hornsby 1998, p. 398) and to show the intention in action/experience of acting (Searle 1983, p. 89). I take Grünbaum to have shown that this use of the pathological case is highly dubious and stands in direct opposition to the use James himself makes of it (cf. Grünbaum 2006, pp. 61-67, 2008a, pp.74-79).

Smith makes the suggestion that we could directly transfer the idea of object-dependent content of demonstrative thoughts and to regard tryings as demonstratively directed towards the relevant body parts. The idea would be that tryings might involve a *de re* or singular reference to relevant parts of the body; hence tryings *qua* subjective experiences would be object-involving (Smith 1988, pp. 419-420). The upshot of this thesis would be that a trying to lift my left arm in the absence of the arm would be of a fundamentally different kind than a normal trying as it would be of a kind that does not essentially depend on the existence of the arm targeted by the trying. The volitional life of the imagined brain in a vat would merely appear to involve a body, hence it would be of a fundamentally different kind than the practical life of a normal person. In this picture we would need a disjunctive account of tryings in order to accommodate the possibility of the brain in a vat scenario.

Smith presents this relational account of trying in order to show that his Trying Theory can repudiate the accusation of inheriting unacceptable features of Cartesianism. I think the fundamental problem of a Cartesian theory of action is the problem I displayed above, i.e., the need to project a telekinetic power into the mind because the natural motility of the body is prevented from entering the precincts of our rational practical capacity. It is the Cartesian conception of the body that is the real hurdle and this is not overcome by forming tryings in the image of the relational account of perception. Precisely because the active nature of a bodily action is said to devolve wholly from the mental trying (cf. Smith 1988, p. 418) and never from any intrinsically bodily capacity it is of no help to make the content of the trying depend on the existence of body parts. On the contrary, it simply underlines the fundamental problem of making it intelligible how a body that can be merely causally affected can nevertheless obey the fiat of the mind spoken in conceptual terms. The relational account does not make the tie between the agent and its body more intimate than a captain is tied to his ship; if the ship sinks the captain goes down with it or he ceases to be the captain. All the relational account secures is that a trying can have the body in view, in the same way we can have a matchbox in view, but the fact that it is possible to stare at an object does not explain how we can move it.[68] It is still assumed that we can

[68] The fact the relational account of trying still faces what I have diagnosed as the transcendental problem of agency confirms that this problem is a self-standing problem vis-à-vis the transcendental problem of perception.

make the essence of the active part of our mind intelligible independently of any reference to an ability to actually move. Our practical capacity to try is supposed to be dependent only on the existence of a body that the agent might never move though she is given the impression that she does so. By conjoining such a capacity with a body as inanimate as that of decerebrated frog we are supposed to make it intelligible how intentional bodily action is possible. I fail to see how this could work without magic. The fact that it is possible to paralyse an agent by intervening at a neurological level does not mean that the power of the agent must be found at an earlier stage in the causal chain that was interrupted. It merely goes to show that our power as agents depends on empirical contingencies and that we are not omnipotent.

Because of the alleged possibility of a brain in a vat with a subjective, volitional life, Dokic argues that the content of our body-directed tryings cannot depend on any particular body. He maintains that a trying is a mode of experience that depends on the existence of some exterior physical reality, because we cannot make sense of the mind as producing the kinaesthetic and exteroceptive sensations without any causal intermediary, i.e., without any feedback mechanism (Dokic 1992, p. 256). He further argues that the tryings of such a disembodied brain would not constitute intentional actions because the causal consequences would not be intentional under any descriptions. Nevertheless the agent is said to voluntarily produce some change in exterior reality and the trying is said to have a definite subjective contour and a determinate content (Dokic 1992, pp. 259-260). I think this picture of our tryings faces much the same problem as does the idea of a concept of perceptual appearances that are supposed to be only externally related to reality.

Dokic asks if his view does not contradict the commonly recognized supposition according to which the content of the will is limited to what the agent is capable of doing. In other words, can the account accommodate Minimal Pragmatism? Dokic's tentative answer is that it might be sufficient that there be some possible world in which the brain in the vat would have the capacity to raise the arm for it to be recognizable as a subject that can try to raise the arm (Dokic 1993, p. 260). I don't think this will work. We are trying to imagine what it is to have the capacity to move one's arm by saying that we can understand what that means by appeal to the capacity to have the capacity to move a body, what Dokic terms a second-order capacity. This seems merely to distract us from the real problem, which is to make sense of our actual capacity to move. We are trying to reconstruct our conception of our capacity to

perform bodily actions via the notion of a capacity that is imagined to be in its agency-involving essence independent of any actual capacity to move and via the notion of an agency-neutral body. So long as this is our starting point I think we will presuppose what we are trying to explain because we can only make sense of our trying to move in terms of what we do, when we actually do move.

Both Smith's and Dokic, in their proposals for a conception of trying as world-involving, assume that all our bodily actions have their most basic description at the bodily level. Our basic trying is always a trying to move our body. This does not sit well with how we actually perform our intentional bodily actions. When I am typing, my attention is directed towards the screen and what I write. From my perspective the most basic action I perform is to write whatever I write and not to move my fingers so as to write the sentence I want to write. As Anscombe said, the description of what I am doing with which I am most familiar, is most often at a distance from the details of my movements (Anscombe 2000, p. 54). I do not need to employ any means-end knowledge in order to type a specific word or sentence, because I possess the acquired skill of typing.

When the Trying Theory identifies our most basic actions as body-specific tryings this is no coincidence. Given the agency-neutral conception of bodily movements it becomes hard to conceive how the trying should be able to leap over the body and simply make things happen in the world. To compensate for the fact that the agent is distanced from its own bodily motility, the body must be moved closer to the subject, but the move comes too late. If we give up the common kind assumption concerning movements we will be able see how it is possible that our teleologically most basic actions can be at a distance from the details of our bodily movements. Once this is allowed we also lose the motivation for the interiorization of our tryings. Instead we can see how a relational view of tryings more congenial with the relational view of perception is available. In fact such a relational view is hinted at when McDowell writes:

> If seen objects (say) are not on the far side of an 'input' interface between mind and world, there is, to say the least, no point in trying to represent objects acted on – which may, of course, be the same objects – as lying on the far side of an 'output' interface. (McDowell 1998g, p. 358)

We can employ the idea of the perceptually-based *de re* demonstrative reference and take the content of our tryings to be object-dependent and the tryings to be object-involving. We can now accommodate the fact that in most of our doings we are not directed towards our own body but towards objects in our environment. We rarely, as in the thought experiments of the Trying Theory, simply try to move our body. Such actions performed in abstraction from the environment for the most part become relevant if we have experienced a breakdown in our capacity to move and need to test it or to rehabilitate our strength, or possibly if we participate in neuro-physiological experiments.

On the basis of a dual conception of movements we can propose that we think of certain bodily activities as constitutive of one's trying. When I reach out for my coffee cup, this action is not seen as a coming together of two notionally separable events; my trying to grasp the cup plus the bodily movement this trying sets in motion. There might be no previous mental event, there is simply my reaching out for the coffee as a bodily activity, and if we decide to use the term 'trying', then this bodily activity is nothing but my trying to grasp the cup. To describe what I do when I reach out as a trying to grasp the cup is to describe the bodily activity with an emphasis on the subjective, striving nature of the bodily occurrences.

We are now in a position where we can fully acknowledge that in order to make sense of a person as a person who can be said to try to lift her arm we need to see her as having the bodily capacity to move her arm upwards. Because we are not restricted by the agency-neutral conception of the physical body we do not need to regard our bodily motility as separate from our rational capacity to form intention and to try to do something. Instead we can regard our motility as constitutive of our power as rational agents and we can regard our motility as shaped by our practical concepts. If we regard our motility as permeated with practical concepts we can regard our tryings as ways of engaging in the actual performance of teleologically basic actions. It is this conception of motility as permeated with teleologically basic capacities of a practical, conceptual nature which is the thesis of embodied conceptualism concerning bodily agency, i.e. the thesis I introduced as Thesis (C) in the introduction. We can now, with Hornsby, say that that the notion of movements that are only intelligible within the space of reasons, which forms the basic idea of the dual conception of movement, is the concept of the kind of movements that occur when we are trying to do something:

> A movement, one might say, is something that occurs in any normal case of an unparalyzed person who tries to do something that requires her to move her body. (Hornsby 1997, p. 101).

The account is of course circular in the sense that it is claimed that we can only make sense of our capacity to try by reference to our bodily capacity to move in the ways required in order to achieve what we are trying to do achieve. Further it is claimed that we can only make sense of our motility and our movements by reference to our capacity to form intentions and perform the teleologically basic actions that we, following the Gricean argument, might also describe as tryings. The interdependence revealed by the circularity is like the interdependence between our capacity to rationally form empirical beliefs and our capacity to have the world presented to us through our sensibility that is our ability to have appearances with conceptual content. The hope is that the need to give a reductive analysis is no longer urgent once we see that the idea of such an analysis rests on the assumption that movements must be agency-neutral and that this assumption makes it very hard to reclaim our notion of ourselves as bodily agents in the world.

If we accept the idea of a trying that occurs in the case of sudden paralysis or even in the brain in a vat scenario we can now see how a disjunctivism of tryings congenial with the disjunctivism of appearances is possible. We now have a disjunctivism of trying which states that whenever there is a trying it is *either* an *idle trying*, in which the agent is not involved in any moving of her body *or* it is an *embodied trying*, which can be more or less successful but which essentially involves the agent actively moving. In contrast to the disjunctivism of Smith this disjunctivism implies a dual conception of movement. What constitutes the embodied nature of the tryings is not just the presence of the body as an object of demonstrative reference; rather it is the bodily activity itself which is regarded as constitutive for the trying.[69] We may say that the trying is expressed in the bodily movement just like the meaning of a sentence is expressed in the spoken words. If we conceive bodily movements as essentially agency-neutral they cannot constitute expressive behaviour anymore than

[69] A similar disjunctivism of trying has been argued by Brewer (1993), Hurley (1998, see p. 272) and Grünbaum (2006, see p. 70). Dokic considers the idea but dismisses it in his 1992 paper (see p. 259). In a later paper he argues for a conception of bodily movements as essentially agency-involving and suggest that such a conception is compatible with a disjunctivist account of trying (Dokic 2003, p. 335, n. 11). In his critique of the internalism of Trying-Theories Gjelsvik in effect proposes a disjunctivist account of trying (Gjelsvik 1990, p. 50, n. 15).

can the behaviour of the planets on the sky (cf. McDowell 1998b, p. 393). If we can conceive of bodily movements as essentially agency-involving, we can regard our tryings as expressed in the movements. When I try to grasp a cup my trying is expressed in the movement and we can say that it is the movement of my hand that is directed towards the cup and not some inner mental trying. To put it with an image borrowed from Merleau-Ponty: the hands of a mature human being are like an 'exterior brain of the human' (PP, 365).[70]

3.7 The anomaly of Hornsby's account

We have seen how an undermining of the common kind assumption concerning bodily movements can pave the way for a disjunctive conception of tryings, and that such a disjunctivism, in contrast to that of Smith, seems to imply the dual conception of movement. Hornsby, however, argues that her disjunctive conception of movements, what I term a dual conception, does not imply a disjunctivism of trying. In a response to Brewer's disjunctivism of willing, she argues that a general disjunctive conception of tryings seems implausible (Hornsby 1998, p. 399). She argues that we cannot in general take the distinction between successful tryings and unsuccessful tryings to be a distinction between two fundamentally different kinds of items. She uses the following example: If a typist is trying to type '£', but because of a reassignment of the keys instead types '@' then on a general disjunctivist account one would be forced to say that her moving her finger is of a fundamentally different kind than it would have been if no reassignment had taken place. The moving of her finger is in both cases her trying to type '£', and it seems more than natural to think that the two tryings are of the same kind whatever the outcome. Such a case, however, does not as such count against Brewer's version of the Trying disjunctivism. The successful and the unsuccessful moving of the hand will both count as cases of trying or willing that fall under the second disjunct of my formulation of the Trying disjunctivism above. In both cases we are dealing with tryings that essentially are cases of actively moving. The contrast in Brewer's disjunctivism as well as the one I formulated above is not between successful and unsuccessful tryings in general but between those that are cases of actively moving

[70] Merleau-Ponty attributes the image to Kant. It would take further work to show that the notion of expression can be helpful in articulating how embodied conceptualism can make bodily agency intelligible. A useful starting point for such work could be Taylor's 'Action as an expression of trying' (1979).

and those that are complete failures to lift even a finger: 'Willing bodily movement is *either* actively moving *or* trying and failing'. (Brewer 1993, p. 311).

I think Brewer's formulation of disjunctivism indicates the real force of Hornsby's argument. The description 'trying and failing' of course covers also the case of typing '@' instead of '£'. Hornsby is not here providing a counterexample but attempts to drive the trying disjunctivist *ad absurdum*. The premise of her argument is that we have a perfectly sensible and uniform conception of what it means that a trying is successful or unsuccessful: A trying to do something is successful if it results in an event the occurrence of which suffices for the thing's having been done and it is unsuccessful if it does not (cf. Hornsby 1997, p. 96, see also Hornsby 1980, p. 44). Given such a uniform conception, what one says about the nature of a trying that fails ought to carry over to all failed tryings, and the absurd result is that, for instance, my trying to score in basketball would have to wait for the ball to finish its journey to the hoop for the determination as to which fundamental kind of trying it was (cf. Grünbaum 2006, p. 71). This shows that it is not advisable to take the determinables of the determinate 'trying' or 'willing' to be on the one hand 'actively moving' and on the other hand 'trying and failing', because actively moving can be trying and failing. I think, however, that we can capture a disjunctive contrast if, as I did above, we use the term 'idle trying' instead of the term 'trying and failing' to characterize a possible case where a subject tries to do something but fails because she does not even make a single movement.

Hornsby maintains the two main theses of her early book, namely that all intentional actions are tryings and that when tryings are actions they cause bodily movements. She does, however, go back on her early claim that the trying takes place on the inside of the body (cf. Hornsby 1998, p. 389, n. 29) and she further argues that the movements may 'participate in all of the colours of the actions that cause them' (Hornsby 1997, p. 101). The last claim is what leads her to her disjunctivism of movement, which she claims is independent of a disjunctivism of trying. It is not easy to see how such position could be coherent.[71] It appears as if Hornsby faces the

[71] Dokic comments that it is less than clear how Hornsby can maintain her movement disjunctivism if tryings can exist exactly as they are in the absence of acting (Dokic 2003, p. 337, n. 337). Haddock sees Hornsby's causal account as committed to the idea that the powers of our bodies are wholly distinct from our powers as agents, and thinks that her disjunctivism of movements cannot overcome this problem (Haddock 2005, p. 169, n. 8).

following dilemma. Either Hornsby must say, as she seems to imply in *Actions* (1980), that no trying is essentially an action, and so every instance of an intentional action could just as well not have been an action (cf. Hornsby 1980, p. 43), or, because she allows for instances of tryings that are completely inert, she will need to make a distinction between tryings that are essentially movement-involving and tryings that are not. The latter option amounts to a disjunctivism of trying. The former option seems to imply the idea that we can make sense of our trying to X, and so our causal powers as agents, independently of any reference to a bodily capacity to move so as to achieve what we are trying to achieve. Thus it seems to imply a denial of Minimal Pragmatism and to imply a commitment to what I called the Myth of Fiat. Hornsby is clear that she does not take her position to bear such a commitment:

> And bodily movements need not be denied a special status in relation to agency. For we may think that our ability to make bodily movements is constitutive of our having the power that we have as agents – to initiate series of events containing some we want. (Hornsby 1997, p. 132)

Hornsby stresses that we can only make sense of a person's trying to raise her arm if we presuppose that she has the teleologically basic capacity to raise her arm at will:

> Possession of the relevant capacity is presupposed to an agent's *trying* to raise her arm. The capacity is not exercised by someone whose arm makes movements against her will – as in anarchic hand syndrome; it is thwarted when someone is impeded in raising her arm; and it is destroyed if an arm is paralyzed. We can only latch onto the facts about someone who intentionally raises her arm when we allow her to be capable of raising it. (Hornsby 2004b, p. 179).

It might be that we can intervene and by a sudden paralysis hinder someone in raising her arm and still claim that in such a case she could have been trying to raise her arm. But this is only because we understand her as having a capacity to raise her arm, the exercise of which we thwart by a more sophisticated means than if we simply held down her arm by force. If a person is gradually losing her capacity to raise her arm she might also keep trying to raise it above her head even after she has lost the strength to do so, but we can hardly make sense of her as still trying years after her arm has become completely paralysed.

Hornsby claims that she can accommodate the necessary connection between a teleologically basic trying to X and the teleologically basic capacity to X and still claim that when we perform intentional bodily actions a particular trying causes bodily movement and that a trying of the same fundamental kind could have occurred had there been no movement. I am not sure what to make of this idea. A great deal hinges on the notion of causality in Hornsby's account. She refers to Lewis' concept of piecemeal causation where what is caused is conceived as a part of the cause and so suggests that the bodily movements are parts of the intentional actions, which she otherwise identifies as the trying that causes the movement (Hornsby 1997, p. 132). This could seem to imply a kind of disjunctivism of trying, namely a disjunction between the tryings that have movements as parts and those that do not have movements as parts.

In any case I take the fundamental idea of a necessary link between our bodily capacity to move and our trying to perform bodily actions and the consequent need to regard our motility as imbued with intentionality to be the most important element of Hornsby's account. Whether we can still understand the relationship between tryings and bodily movements as a rationalizing causal rational relation in analogy to the rational causal relation between a fact and an appearance in genuine veridical perception is a further issue.[72] I would still maintain that the formulation of a disjunctivism of tryings in terms of disjunction between *idle tryings* and *embodied tryings* provides the means for recognizing the necessary link between tryings and bodily capacities and that it can serve as a way of blocking arguments that appeal to the possibility of brains in a vat.

[72] We can draw an analogy between mere appearances and mere movements by saying that both kinds of occurrences are understood as caused by mere causes. On Hornsby's picture this analogy transfers to genuine perception and subjectively 'tainted' movements as they are both said to have rationalizing causes.

CHAPTER 4
AGENCY IN RATIONAL AND NON-RATIONAL ANIMALS

4.1 Embodied conceptualism and the status of non-linguistic animals

Here is how Hornsby diagnoses the predicament which I have argued we need a disjunctivism of movements to escape:

> The problem, as I have said, arises from supposing that the bodily movements that there are when there are actions might be located in a world bereft of beings who do things for reasons – a world where so-called 'mere movements of bodies' belong. (Hornsby 1998, p. 393)

But what does it mean that a being does things for reasons? Does it require that the subject is able to take a reason as a reason, and so has the reflective capacity to step back and ask whether a putative reason for action should be assumed as one's own? In other words, is the kind of agency for which I have argued we need a dual conception of bodily movements restricted to linguistic animals such as mature human beings? The answer implied by McDowell's way of posing the problem of agency seems to be yes. McDowell proposed that we need to conceive of the bodily goings-on essential for the carrying out of intentional bodily actions as 'actualizations of our active nature in which conceptual capacities are inextricably implicated' (MW, p. 90). One worry is that this reduces non-linguistic animals including human infants to pure robots with no more agency than a thermostat, since a precondition for agency seems to be initiation into language. A further worry is that unless we recognize that our ability to move is of the same kind as that of other, non-linguistic animals we will end up mystifying our own motility. The counter proposal would be that we need to recognize an element of non-conceptual intentionality at the motor level that is shared between us and other animals. These worries mirror objections that McDowell's conceptualism has met in the area of perception.

The two parallel objections regarding perception are as follows. First it has been argued that we should recognize the actual presence of non-conceptual content in the mental life of non-linguistic animals and that McDowell's conceptualism is unable to do so (Wright 1998, 2002, Smith 2002, pp. 106-107). Second it has been argued that because we share perceptual capacities with other animals, and such animals have non-conceptual content, we further need to acknowledge the presence of non-conceptual content in the perception of mature human beings (Bouveresse 1996, p. 40, Peacocke

2001, p. 614, Smith 2002, *ch. 3*, Bernstein 2002, p. 225). The two arguments can be put together so as to form an apparent dilemma facing the conceptualist. Either you recognize the non-conceptual content of non-linguistic animals, in which case you will need to recognize that because we share perceptual abilities with other animals we must share non-conceptual content too, or you deny that we share any content with other animals, in which case you will be forced to deny other animals any perceptual intentionality.

I would find it disastrous for conceptualism if it really were doomed to deny non-linguistic animals any kind of perception or agency. In this chapter I will argue that the human chauvinism of conceptualism does not necessarily have such implausible and intolerable consequences. I will do so by first examining the two arguments concerning perception. The defence against these two objections will leave intact a third attack, which I will address in turn. In section 4.8 I will return to the issue of agency in order to show how the defence against the arguments concerning perception can be applied to the parallel objections concerning agency.

One of the authors who have argued that McDowell's conceptualism cannot accommodate a basic level of non-conceptual practical intentionality is Hubert Dreyfus. In his critique Dreyfus draws on the work of Merleau-Ponty. In the last section of this chapter I turn to the works of Merleau-Ponty and argue that his conception of the relation between linguistic and non-linguistic animals does not rely on the idea of non-conceptual content share by mature human beings and other animals. This section serves as the beginning of my discussion of the relation between Merleau-Ponty and the embodied conceptualism that I aim at developing. The remaining three chapters of this thesis are devoted to a discussion of the possible impact a confrontation with the works of Merleau-Ponty could have on embodied conceptualism.

4.2 Conceptual versus non-conceptual content

To enable us to see what is at stake in this debate let us first define conceptual and non-conceptual content. Both parties to the debate usually agree on a strong notion of conceptual capacities which link possession of concepts to the possibility of justification and consequently to language. The Priority Principle, which states a constitutive relation between linguistic and conceptual abilities, is common ground. We can now define conceptual content as content that *cannot* be ascribed to a creature unless that creature *possesses* the concepts involved in specifying the content (cf. Bermúdez 1998a, p. 301,

n. 1). In turn we can define non-conceptual content as content that we *can* ascribe to a creature even if the creature *does not possess* any of the concepts needed for specifying the content. Both conceptual and non-conceptual content are taken to be representational content in the sense that the content represents the world as being in a certain way. To specify the content of an experience is then to specify how the state represents the world which is how the world needs to be for it to be as it is represented, i.e., the correctness conditions of the content.

For instance, if we say of a cat, which we observe, that it is fleeing from a dog through a hole in a fence, and we say of the cat that it sees the hole as way of escaping, then we might say that the cat's perception had non-conceptual content, which we as theorists, using our conceptual capacities can express by saying 'That hole is slip-throughable'. Here we ascribe a certain representation of its environment to the cat, which might turn out to be correct or incorrect according to how the world is. That we take the content to be non-conceptual implies that the cat *need not* possess the concept of a hole or any other concepts used in our specification in order for it to have a perception of the kind it actually has. In fact given the Priority Principle it cannot possess any concepts since it does not possess language.

4.3 Blind animals

Let us now look at the first of the two arguments against conceptualism mentioned above. The objection is that the conceptualism of McDowell has the undesired consequence that we come to deny that non-linguistic animals can have perception, in the sense of sensuous experiences that display any kind of intentionality. In *Mind and World*, McDowell insists that his conceptualism does not reduce the life of non-linguistic animals either to mere movements of affectless automata or to a stream of non-intentional sensations (cf. MW, pp. 64, 69, 114-123, 182-183). Despite such reassurances I do not think *Mind and World* read in isolation succeeds in making it clear how a conceptualist can make sense of other animals as directed towards the same world as us. In *Mind and World* McDowell works with Gadamer's distinction between a human mode of living in a world (*Welt*) and an animal mode of inhabiting an environment (*Umwelt*) (MW, p. 115). It is in this context that McDowell denies that non-linguistic animals can have any experience of objective reality (MW, p. 114) or any awareness of an inner or an outer world (MW, p. 119). Furthermore he rejects the idea that we can ascribe non-conceptual representations of the environment to non-linguistic

animals at what is sometimes called the animal level as opposed to the sub-animal level:[73] 'I am rejecting a picture of a mere animal's perceptual sensitivity to its environment: a picture in which the senses yield content that is less than conceptual but already such as to represent the world' (MW, p. 121). The reason for this rejection is that such a picture would be yet another version of the Myth of the Given. What can be given for the animal is taken to be something which can also be given in our perception, only we are fortunate enough to be able to express the content by putting it into words (MW, pp. 122-123).[74] These negative characterizations of the non-linguistic animal make it hard to see how we can uphold a conception of non-linguistic animal as in any way perceptually relating to the world. At least part of the problem resides in *Mind and World*'s undifferentiated conception of the region of discourse which is contrasted with the logical space of reasons and simply named the realm of law. As we saw earlier, since the publication of *Mind and World*, McDowell has adopted a more liberal account of contrastive logical space of science because he finds the conception in terms of nomological laws unsatisfactory monolithic. In some places this is done with reference to the need to find room for non-human animals:

> I agree with Taylor that there is something between spontaneity in what he calls 'the strong Kantian sense, turning crucially on conceptual, reflective thought', on the one hand and conformity to Galilean law, on the other. We need this middle ground for thinking about non-human animals. (McDowell 2002a, p. 283).

Indeed the combination of a rejection of non-conceptual content at an animal level and the notion of the realm of law as paradigmatically represented by the physical sciences' understanding of meaningless movements of planets, does seem to undermine the

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[73] The terms 'animal' and 'sub-animal' serve to generalize the distinction, originally made by Dennett, between the personal level and the sub-personal level. The personal level is the level of content accessible to the subject and the sub-personal level is the level of content that is only accessible through the third-personal stance of cognitive science.

[74] McDowell underlines that he has no quarrel with the use of the notion of non-conceptual content at the sub-animal level investigated by cognitive science (MW, p. 55, p. 121). Thus it can seem exaggerated to claim, as does Bermúdez, that McDowell is 'opposed to the very idea of nonconceptual content' (Bermúdez 2007, p. 57). The claim however is reasonable if the idea of non-conceptual content is taken to be incompatible with McDowell's suggestion that ascription of sub-personal non-conceptual content, though immensely useful, must be considered as 'as if' content (cf. McDowell 1998h, p. 351).

possibility of acknowledging non-human animals as experientially related to the world.[75]

4.4 Animals in touch with the world

In *Mind and World* the only positive description of mere animals is in terms of sensory sensitivities that enable the animal to respond to the environment in a way appropriate to certain given biological needs (MW, p. 122).[76] However, in later writings, McDowell gives more flesh to the idea of the less than fully-fledged subjectivity of mere animals. He operates with a distinction between responsiveness to reasons and responsiveness to reasons *as such* (McDowell 2006c, p.1, McDowell 2006a, p. 325). Mere animals can be said to act for a reason whereas only rational animals can respond to a reason as a reason. When we, for instance, say about an animal that it is fleeing, we are making its behaviour intelligible in the light of a reason for its flight. Fleeing is responding to something which is a reason, namely danger or at least what is taken to be danger (cf. McDowell 2006d, p. 2). Here McDowell allows for intentional-explanations of animal behaviour and for them to be able to take something as a danger. That an animal can perceive something as a danger implies that it can be mistaken in how it takes things to be, and this seems to imply ascribing representational content in some broad sense. In the debate with Dreyfus he describes what we share with animals as responsiveness to affordances. Both a cat and a human, when engaged in getting from one place to another, can be expected to respond to the affordance constituted by a hole in a wall big enough to go through, by passing through the opening (McDowell 2007a, p. 343). Such descriptions can be true of both us and other animals, only there is more to the truth about our behaviour because the competence we exercise in going through a hole is, according McDowell, permeated with conceptual capacities (cf. McDowell 2007a, pp. 344-345). He writes: 'Affordances are no longer merely input to a human animal's natural motivational tendencies; now they are data for her rationality, not only her practical rationality but her theoretical rationality as well' (McDowell 2007a, p. 344). It

[75] Another way in which *Mind and World* is problematically monolithic is revealed by Smith when he notes that the appeal to Gadamer's and Heidegger's distinction between *Welt* and *Umwelt* in itself does not secure a sufficiently rich notion of the life of higher animals as it is meant to apply to all living organisms, including unicellular organisms (Smith 2002, p. 103).

[76] To be fair, in the 'Afterword', McDowell does explicitly state that it is 'perfectly all right' by his lights, if anyone wishes to talk about the world-directedness of non-linguistic animals, as long as such talk is detached from spontaneity in the Kantian sense (MW, p. 183).

is in this context that McDowell uses the metaphor of form and matter to distinguish the perceptual experiences of non-linguistic animals from that of mature humans. Our experiences can have content that is 'materially identical' with that of other animals, but in our case the content takes on a conceptual form which transforms the character of the experience (McDowell 2007a, p. 348). A cat can see 'that a hole is big enough for it to go through' just as we can, but our perception comes in a distinctive conceptual form (McDowell 2007a, p. 351 n. 29). In fact already in his paper, 'The content of Perceptual Experience' (1998h) McDowell makes use of a notion of content at the animal level. In his critique of Dennett's theory of perception, McDowell talks about a frogs' '*froggy* involvement with content' parallel to the personal involvement with conceptual content of a rational animal (McDowell 1998h, p. 347). Here McDowell underlines the need to hold on to content-involving truths in biology, which are not reducible to content at the sub-animal level, on pain of losing all grip on the idea that for instance a frog is in direct touch with its environment (McDowell 1998h, pp. 349-350). One possible description of the content of a frog's perception could be 'that there is a bug-like object at such and such a position' (McDowell 1998h, p. 351). Ascribing such content to the frog naturally does not mean ascribing, for instance, the concept of an object or any other concept in the demanding sense, so it must in some sense be ascribing non-conceptual content. In a more recent response to Brandom, McDowell emphasizes that ascription of knowledge to non-human animals is not just ascription of reliable responsive dispositions, which would not differentiate such knowledge from the response of iron, rusting in the presence of moisture (McDowell 2002b, p. 104, McDowell 2006c, p. 5). Using Wittgenstein's and Anscombe's example of a non-human intentional action, he states that a cat's awareness of the prey it stalks must be said to be a genuine case of awareness of something, and so, we may add, a genuine case of intentionality (Wittgenstein 1984, §647, Anscombe 2000, p. 86, see also McDowell 1998i, p. 411).

4.5 The coherence of McDowell's position

Now the second argument mentioned above enters the scene. If it is allowed that we can ascribe non-conceptual content to non-linguistic animals and so that we share a perceptual sensitivity with such animals, are we not forced to admit that our perceptions share an element of non-conceptual content with that of animals? This *animal-likeness* argument only goes through if it is assumed that perceptual sensitivity can only be a common feature due to having identical content, which must in that case be non-

conceptual in both cases. But the fact that the general term 'perceptually sensitive' applies to both humans and mere animals does not rule out that there are truths about our perception which transcend what is the case for mere animals. Mere animal perception and the perception of rational animals can be seen as two species of one genus: perceptual experience.[77] If this suggestion is to be successful in blocking the inference from commonality to identity of content and keep animals in contact with the world, it must be shown that the introduction of what McDowell calls materially identical content between human and non-human perception can avoid the pitfall he argues the usual notion of non-conceptual content falls into. In other words it must be shown that we can coherently both reject a certain notion of non-conceptual content and endorse a notion of material content or matter also at the animal level.

McDowell claims that the distinction between form and matter allows him to avoid that talk of such non-conceptual material content falls victim to the Myth of the Private Ostensive Definition (McDowell 2007a, p. 351). What is the pitfall a notion of material content needs to navigate? The problematic conception of non-conceptual content is one that involves the thought that starting out from our perception it must be possible to isolate what such perception has in common with animal perception by, as it were, stripping off their specifically human garments (cf. MW, p. 64). Such an idea involves the dualism of schema and content, where the schema is our conceptual framing of a content which is considered to be itself independent of the conceptualization. This dualism forces us to regard the way we give meaning to our concepts as a private act of ostensive definition. McDowell reads Wittgenstein's attack on the idea of such private ostensive definitions as an attack on the Myth of the Given (MW, p. 19). The basic problem with such a model is that what is thought to provide justification for my correct use of the concept I putatively installed through my ostensive definition is the given-ness of something which is already given prior to any conceptualization. This is the Myth of the Given: A bare presence which is beyond any possible critical assessment is supposed nevertheless to provide me with justification, but such justification can at the most amount to a blind faith. Why is the form-matter distinction not just another version of the schema-content dualism? In contrast to the

[77] This is what McDowell suggests regarding the notion of feeling pain, which is not taken to be equivocal but simply covers two species (McDowell 2002, p. 288). This does not imply a disjunctivism of perceptions and sensations structurally similar to the disjunctivism of perceptual appearances, since the relation genus-species is not equivalent to the relation determinable-determinate.

schema-content dualism the form-matter distinction does not imply that the matter can exist without any form. To use an image: when the craftsman starts out with a lump of clay it already has a certain form which he transforms into the shape of a plate. From the plate there is no way to go back to the shape of the original lump by stripping the form that was created by the craftsman. The implication of the metaphor of form and matter seems to be that we must say that the perception of animals also has a form only in contrast to ours, a form that is not constituted by conceptual capacities. We might also think of the differences between different forms of art, where in spite of the difference in form we can nevertheless recognize the matter of two works of art as the same.

4.6 The return of the dilemma

One might still wonder if the recognition of responsiveness to reasons at the animal level does not undermine the *sui generis* nature of human cognition and action because it opens up the logical space of reasons to non-linguistic animals.[78] It can seem as if McDowell is faced with a new version of the dilemma I formulated at the beginning of this chapter: *Either* he admits that animals really do act for reasons and the *sui generis* nature of humans must be forsaken *or* he holds onto the *sui generis* nature of humans with the cost that reason-explanations of animals are the products of a merely instrumental intentional stance, from which we ascribe 'as if'-content not significantly different from the ascription of non-conceptual content at the sub-animal level.

McDowell recognizes the need to answer this dilemma in his exchange with Davidson on this matter:

> We need a positive line about our ways of understanding brutes, and it is not satisfying to suggest that crediting them with intelligent engagements with their environment is just convenience, called for only by the fact that we lack detailed knowledge about their internal control machinery. (McDowell 2003, p. 676).

To see why this dilemma is not binding we need first to pin down some characteristics, crucial in this context, of the space-of-reasons kind of intelligibility. What is distinct about the intelligibility of the space of reasons is that it requires that the subjects

[78] Another way to raise the question I deal with here is to ask why we should believe there to be two fundamentally different kinds of second nature, as there must be according to McDowell since he also employs the term 'second nature' about the acquired skills of, for instance, a trained dog. (cf. McDowell 2000, p.98, 2006a, p. 236).

themselves can be seen as aspiring to conform to rational norms (McDowell 2006a, pp. 218, 236). When we say of the cat that it chases the bird because it sees a prey and is hungry, we are not making the behaviour intelligible as intentional because of the ability of the cat to assess the putative reason for its behaviour. If we ask why the animal has this goal there is a sense of such a question which does not find a foothold here. In the animal case, we can answer such a question about the goal by reference to the biological needs of the animal. We can understand their behaviour as goal-oriented and at the same time regard the control of those goals over the behaviour of the animal as an outcome of biological forces (cf. MW, p. 115). This contrasts with the case of rational animals where we can make sense of an intentional action or a perception by placing them in the space of reasons which implies that we conceive of the subject as aspiring to conform to rational norms. If we start explaining the reason why a person did something in terms of biological needs that control the goal-setting of the person, then we have left the space of reason and we are no longer regarding the action as the action of a rational agent with autonomy. The crucial difference is the way the appeal to norms of rationality is essential for the space-of-reason intelligibility. This does not reduce other animals to mere machines, they have an ability to be self-moving and respond to reasons, but because they do not have the ability to stop and ask themselves whether a putative reason is a good reason, we cannot see them as aspiring to live up to rational norms.

This is admittedly is not a full answer to the challenge, as I have still said very little positively about the way we make animal behaviour intelligible. What I have said I think is sufficient to make it at least plausible that the conceptualist is not forced to say that animals can have no perceptual contact with the world.

There are many further questions in this area, which I have not addressed here. To mention just one: Isn't there a specific problem for the conceptualist concerning sensations such as pain? According to McDowell, in rational animals pain is a limit case of an intentional awareness of a fact, because the fact is constitutively dependent on the awareness. This can seem to rob mere animals of any pain or pleasure since without conceptual awareness it seems there is nothing left to be aware of (cf. MW, pp. 22, 120).[79] An answer to this concern could begin by pointing to the contrast

[79] Wright (1998, 2002) pursues this line of criticism in his exchanges with (cf. McDowell 1998i, p. 429, McDowell 2002, p. 288).

between our notion of a mere appearance and our concept of feeling pain, consisting in the fact that the latter concept in no way forces us to think that conceptual capacities are essential for the concept to apply. [80]

4.7 Intentionality *überhaupt*

With this much said we may ask why all of this should not give renewed force to the motivation behind the appeal to non-conceptual content in an understanding of how our conceptual intentionality is possible at all? This worry is distinct from the two initial objections presented in the form of a dilemma above. This new line of criticism has been pursued by A. D. Smith.

Smith accuses McDowell of supposing that the intentionality of our perception has a 'wholly different basis' than does the intentionality of other animals (Smith 2002, p. 107) and argues that this creates a problem independent of whether or not our perceptual experience is permeated with concepts:

> Even if every human perception were shot through with concepts, so that any 'stripping' would falsify the phenomenology, it still wouldn't be this conceptual dimension that explains how we are able to perceive physical objects *at all*. (Smith 2002, p. 107).

This criticism seems to me to be off target. McDowell is not claiming that the intentionality of non-linguistic animals is utterly irrelevant for the transcendental question of how perceptual intentionality is possible at all. He states precisely that if it were not because we were able to see our capacity to have facts perceptually manifested to us as a transformation 'of a prior responsiveness to objective reality', this would just add to our transcendental anxieties (McDowell 1998i, p. 412). In other words, if McDowell's conceptualism in fact had the consequence that he would be forced to deny that animals have perception of objects, this would not just go against all common sense, it would also, according to himself, add to the mystification of our special openness to the world.[81] As we saw in *Chapter One*, McDowell's disjunctive

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[80] McDowell further stresses that there is no need to suppose that an implication of conceptual capacities is 'an element in the very idea of awareness' (McDowell 2006c, p. 6).

[81] In earlier works McDowell states that in his picture the initiation into language appears as mysterious: 'There is certainly a mysterious transition in my view of language acquisition ("Light Dawns")' (McDowell, 1998d, p. 334). He also states that: 'What is needed is an understanding of how content, explicitly conceived as inaccessible except "from inside", can be comprehended as a

conception of perception and his conceptualism are targeted against two connected but separable threats to our conception of ourselves as beings that can have thoughts about the world. The threat which is at the forefront in *Mind and World* is the one that stems from the difficulty of seeing our perceptual intake as both providing a rational constraint on our beliefs and as a natural phenomena. It is for the purpose of debunking this specific threat that no help is found in the appeal to the intentionality of non-conceptual animals (cf. McDowell 1998i p. 412). At the animal level, no counterpart to this problem is found because the problem is one that concerns the possibility of intentional experiences that purport to be of an objective reality. The problem only arises because the freedom implied in our conception of the cognition and action of rational animals can seem to rule out such freedom as a part of nature. There is also a broader threat to intentionality which does reach all the way to the animal level, namely the one that comes from thinking about cognition and action as merely a product of one part of an organism telling another part of the organism. This is the problem McDowell takes up in his critique of Dennett's theory of perception.

McDowell argues that we cannot make sense of animals being in perceptual contact with the world in terms of some part of the animal having access to another part of the animal. This is a problem which attaches to intentionality as such and not specifically to conceptual intentionality:

> Moving to personal dealings with content, such as the conscious perceptual experiences of adult human beings, makes all kinds of differences. But there is not reason to suppose that it makes any difference on this point: Our dealings with content, in our consciously enjoyed perceptual experience, are no more a matter of access to our own interiors than a frog's dealings with content are. (McDowell 1998h, p. 356).

The basic problem with a model like Dennett's is that the animal's perceptual contact with its environment is reduced to some part of its brain receiving perceptual input from another part. If this is what the frog's access to the environment consists in, however,

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precipitate of simpler modes of activity and awareness than those in which it figures.' (McDowell 1987, p. 74). *Mind and World* can be seen as an attempt to exorcise at least a certain version of such a felt need, cf. McDowell (MW, p. 125): 'This transformation [from mere animal to thinker and intentional agent] risks looking mysterious'. The metaphor of dawn breaking, which McDowell repeatedly makes use of, is found in Wittgenstein's 'On Certainty' §141 (cf. McDowell 2003, p. 679).

then the frog is really only in contact with itself, in a sort of brain-introspection. Even talking about the frog's access is going too far, since what we have is just one part of the brain that receives input from another part, and unless the frog is identified with a department of the brain it cannot on that basis be said to have any access to anything. The problem is that if we start out with talking about sub-animal information-processing we will never catch the frog and we will never be able to make sense of the frog as a living animal perceptually sensitive to its environment.[82] This problem is general since such an input-output, sandwich model is exactly a model which spans all creatures with brains. Furthermore the problem is not confined to perception. The consequence of the model is that the visible behaviour of the animal is regarded as movements which are no different in kind from the leg movements of a decapitated frog. There is no longer any self-moving animal to be found, there is merely some brain events, which might or might not be identified with mental events with a subjective character, causing some movements of a body. These general problems concerning perception and agency arise because the mental occurrences are to be located in an inner part of the animal, which receives input that is not essentially object-involving and which produces movements that are not essentially agency-involving. The basic problem is the scientific monism that identifies all events with scientifically understood events narrowly construed.[83] With this picture in place the animal as an organism living in an environment is lost from sight.

The part of this general problem that concerns perception is not identical with the problem which McDowell tackles with the disjunctive conception of perception. The disjunctive conception of perception serves to undercut the inference from the subjective indistinguishability of hallucination and genuine perception to the common kind assumption. The basic reason why an interface consisting in a highest common factor of mere appearance is problematic is, according to McDowell, that it leaves us unable to see how such appearance can even purport to be of the objective world. This problem does not exist at the animal level since the perception of a non-

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[82] It is as this point that McDowell refers to Gibson's theory of perception as restoring the connection to the world via a direct perception of affordances (McDowell 1998h, p. 355). This reference indicates that McDowell considers the perception of animals to be something with its own form that can be further investigated by a science that does not limit itself to the sub-animal level.

[83] Merleau-Ponty points out that though behaviourism starts out from the healthy idea that we should study the public 'stream of activity' of the organism, it has often ended by placing the behaviour inside the nervous system exactly because of a materialistic prejudice (SC, p. 2, n.2)

linguistic creature cannot purport to be of the world. The idea of a mere appearance has no grip when we are thinking of non-linguistic animals, because it only makes sense in a context where we can ascribe the ability to make an explicit distinction between how things seem to one and how things are in reality. The ability to make such a distinction in turn requires that the subject has the capacity to suspend the belief in what is seen and to ask itself whether how things appear to it is a good reason to take things to be as they seem.[84] The result is that we do not seem to require a disjunctivism of perception concerning mere animals, but merely what I have called a disjunctivism of perceptual intake (see *Chapter Two* (2.3)). This is what we find in the distinction between non-conceptual content at the sub-animal level, the mere input, and the material content available to the animal level in its environment.[85] In the case of rational animals we need to say more, both because of the possibility of a perfect hallucination and because the material content of the animal level cannot fill the role of a rational constraint on our beliefs. We need to conceive of the cognitive intake in perception as not falling short of the facts, i.e., a disjunctivism of appearances, and we need to see the facts themselves as rationally constraining the subject, i.e., a conceptualism of perception.

The concern about the possibility of agency which I was addressing in the previous chapter through the introduction of a disjunctivism of movement and a disjunctivism of tryings can now more clearly be seen as a specific concern about rational agency. The worry was about how we can make sense of some action as being the teleologically most basic action, and had its source in the idea that bodily movements must be conceived of as agency-neutral. This is attached to the notion of rational agency, since the teleological notion of basic actions is here taken as referring to a capacity of the agent to carry out such actions as intentional actions and without doing anything else in order to do so. That such actions are intentional is understood in terms of the agent's non-observational knowledge of the teleologically most basic

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[84] The idea is not that such a suspension can come out of the blue through a *libertas indifferentia*. This would imply that trusting one's senses is in general something one chooses, but as McDowell writes: 'One does not choose to accept that things are the way one's experience plainly reveals that they are' (McDowell 2006c, p.9).

[85] McDowell argues that if our perception is a matter of access to sub-personal content then the same must go for the mere animal which 'seems merely ludicrous' (McDowell 1998i, p. 348). I take this as a kind of *reductio* of Dennett's picture of human perception. Understood thus, the argument rests on the idea that it is in a way even more obvious in the non-human animal case that perception is not a kind introspection. A reason for this could be that the idea of mere appearances has no grip when a creature has no language.

action and her capacity to reflect on her action and ask whether she has a good reason to perform it. These are requirements which are specific for rational agency.

We have seen that there is a more general concern about the possibility of agency at all, which stems from a departmentalization of the animal that tends to erase the animal as a living being in an environment from the picture. To counter such dissolution of the animal into a series of events which simply happens we need to see the animal's behaviour as something over and above the level of neuro-physiological and mechanical events. We can say that just as we need a certain disjunctivism of movements to account for human agency, we also need a kind of disjunctivism of movements at the animal level, in order to recognize the behaviour as consisting in the self-moving of the animal and not just in a series of in themselves agency-neutral events.[86]

The distinction I made above, between a disjunctivism of appearances and a disjunctivism of perceptual input, has the further advantage that it helps explain how McDowell can deny that there is any 'fully subjective fact' about what the colour vision of a cat is like (MW, p. 122). This is not a denial of a first-'person' perspective of the cat, if what is meant by a first-person perspective on the world is thought of as a necessarily embodied perspective and hence the perspective of a certain self-moving animal on its actual environment. What seems to be implied is a denial of the possibility of such a perspective without that perspective being in any contact with the environment of the animal, as it would be claimed possible if it was claimed that a bat brain in a vat could have a subjective life indistinguishable from the subjective life of a flying bat. For it to make sense to talk about such an indistinguishable life would involve the idea of a fact about how things appear to the bat, which requires us to see the bat's experience as something which could be given to a rational animal. The idea of such a 'fully subjective fact' about the way things are within the consciousness of the mere animal rests on a layer model of our own perceptual experience. The thought that just as there is a fact about the way things appear to me, so there is a fact about the way things

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[86] (A) As Taylor notes, behaviourism exploits the ambiguity of the notion of behaviour between either 'colourless' movements, or actions coloured by their meaning, to gain some intuitive support (cf. Taylor 1964, pp. 55-56, n.1).

(B) To what extent we can also talk of a disjunctivism of trying at the animal level is an open question. If such disjunctivism is taken to amount to a denial of the possible existence of any genuine tryings that are not embodied in any bodily behaviour, an analogue to the trying-disjunctivism could make sense at the animal level.

appear to the animals, involves the idea that the way things appear to me must be at a certain level independent of what distinguishes me from the non-linguistic animal, i.e., conceptual capacities. This is the idea that we can reach the naked 'subjective fact' of the appearance of the non-linguistic experience by stripping our perception of its conceptual garments and thereby reaching a lowest common factor between it and the perception of a cat. But such a factorizing model will succumb to the Myth of the Given.

4.8 The two objections concerning agency

The fact that the conceptualist can make room for the idea that there is a possible general threat to agency, distinct from the specific threat to rational agency discussed in the previous chapter, indicates that conceptualism does not imply an impossibility of recognizing animal behaviour as expressing agency. This already goes some way towards answering the two initial worries concerning agency with which I opened this chapter and which mirrored the two objections concerning a conceptualism of perception I have been discussing above.

The first objection concerning action is that the conceptualist is forced to deny mere animals any agency. In the foregoing I have argued that the conceptualist can substantiate the following two distinctions. First, there is a distinction between the material content of the animal level and the same material content in a conceptual form at the personal level. Second, there is a distinction between responsiveness to reasons and responsiveness to reasons as such. In so far as I have succeeded in making these distinctions plausible I have also responded to the first objection concerning action. The responsiveness to reasons, though not as such, is exactly what the conceptualist will claim can legitimately be used in our understanding of animal behaviour.

The second objection concerning agency argues that we must share our basic motility with other animals and that therefore it cannot be a capacity that is conceptual throughout. We find a version of this argument coined in terms of our bodily coping activities in Dreyfus' 2005 APA Presidential Address:

> Premise (1) Concepts are necessarily linguistic.
>
> Premise (2) Non-linguistic animals are capable of the same kind of coping activity that we are involved in.

Conclusion: Our coping activity, being of the same kind as that of animals, cannot be constituted by conceptual capacities. (Cf. Dreyfus 2005, p. 12, n. 38).

A ready answer to this quick argument is implicit in the response to the animal-likeness argument discussed above. In the APA address, Dreyfus' claim is that when we are absorbed in bodily coping activity at an expert level, for instance as a car driver, we are simply responding like other animals to the affordances we perceive and there is neither conceptual content in our perception nor in the bodily response. McDowell's answer is to point out that he can acknowledge that we share responsiveness to affordances with other animals but deny that a description in those terms is the whole truth about our responsiveness (McDowell 2007a, p. 343). In our case, McDowell claims, responsiveness to affordances takes a conceptual form.

I conclude that conceptualism can lay to rest the two concerns raised in beginning of this chapter and thus, so far, maintain that intentional bodily action in the case of mature humans is permeated with conceptual capacities and do so without thereby robbing mere animals of agency.

4.9 Merleau-Ponty and McDowell on human nature

In the second round of the Dreyfus-McDowell, debate Dreyfus concedes that the animal-likeness argument does not work (Dreyfus 2007b, p. 354). As Dreyfus points out, both the philosophers he takes to support his arguments, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, would be opposed to sameness even at the level of bodily coping activities between humans and other animals. This is implied already in the fact that both authors make use of a distinction between world and environment to distinguish humans from other animals (*Welt* and *Umgebung*/ *univers* and *milieu*, Heidegger 1983, p.30; SC, p. 190). Merleau-Ponty's opposition to the animal-likeness argument is unequivocally expressed when he approvingly quotes Herder[87]: 'Si l'homme avait les sens d'un animal, il n'aurait pas de raison' (SC, p. 196). This quote can be read as a pendant to Wittgenstein's remark about the lion who we would not understand if it could speak, that is, if it could it would no longer be a lion. Inversely, if a man could have the senses of a lion he would no longer be a man.

[87] Merleau-Ponty quotes Herder from Goldstein's *DerAufbau des Organismus*. McDowell also counts Herder, mediated by Charles Taylor, as an ally (cf. McDowell 1997, p.75).

In the passage of *La structure du comportement* where the quote from Herder appears, Merleau-Ponty puts his view in terms that seem in some respects to be congenial with McDowell's conception and in other respects to put a distance between the two:

> On ne peut pas parler du corps et de la vie en général, mais seulement du corps animal et de la vie animal, du corps humain et de la vie humaine, … L'esprit n'est pas une différence spécifique qui viendrait s'ajouter à l'être vital ou psychique pour en fair un homme. L'homme n'est pas un animal raisonnable. (SC, p. 196).

Here Merleau-Ponty, just like McDowell, underlines the lack of literal commonality between mere animals and human beings. For McDowell this equals emphasizing the special nature of humans as rational animals and this point is, word for word, contradicted by Merleau-Ponty. But the context of the literal contradiction shows that Merleau-Ponty's point is that human beings cannot be conceived of in a factorizing way, with a lowest common factor shared with animals on top of which rationality is added. This view is of course shared by McDowell. Merleau-Ponty's claim that we cannot talk about the body and life in general cannot mean that the terms are as equivocal as Merleau-Ponty's phrasing taken in isolation would suggest. Such a reading would suggest that Merleau-Ponty would deny that we can in one sentence say of both an animal and human that they are alive and by that be expressing a truth that does not need any disambiguation in order to be understood. It would also mean that Merleau-Ponty's use of such terms as *phenomenal body* and *motor intentionality* would be equivocal between animals and humans in a way his own use of the terms in no way suggests.[88] A better reading is to say that the claim is that an animal life/body and a human life/body, though being species of one genus, are also instantiations of that genus of fundamentally different forms. This reading is supported by what follows in the passage quoted above:

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[88] In *La structure du comportement*, Merleau-Ponty argues that already biology must refer to the 'phenomenal body' as a centre for action of the organism as a whole (SC, p. 195). The idea of motor intentionality is introduced with reference to the biologist Buytendijk, with reference to experiments with both animals and humans, and Merleau-Ponty also talks of the *corps propre*, the 'lived body', in general terms (SC, p. 30). Buytendijk uses the term *Bewegungsentwurf*, which Merleau-Ponty in *Phénoménologie de la perception* translates as '*intentionalité motrice*', i.e., motor intentionality (PP, p. 128).

> L'esprit n'est rien ou c'est une transformation réelle et non pas idéelle de l'homme. Parce qu'il n'est pas une nouvelle sorte d'être, mais une nouvelle forme d'unité, il ne peut reposer sur lui-même. (SC, p. 196).

Here Merleau-Ponty is expressing what, in McDowell's terms, can be called a 'substantial continuity across the divide' between animals and humans (McDowell 2006c, p. 13). Like McDowell, Merleau-Ponty underscores that the mind is not a free-floating entity which mysteriously enters nature from the outside, but is rather the result of a transformation within nature which leaves nothing in the life of humans untouched: 'L'apparition de la raison et de l'esprit ne laisse pas intacte en lui une sphére des instincts fermée sur soi' (SC, p. 196). A similar thought is expressed by McDowell when he writes: 'The facts of our animality are present in our habitation of the space of reasons in the transfigured form that comes with acquiring conceptual capacities' (McDowell 2002, p. 299).

McDowell's emphasis on the 'substantial continuity' sometimes comes out as if contradicting the idea of a thorough transformation:

> And in some respects, the lives of mature human beings simply match the lives of mere animals; it would be absurd to suppose that *Bildung* effects a transfiguration, so to speak, of everything that happens in a human life. (MW, p. 183).

In a footnote to this passage, McDowell specifies that it is in aspects of mature human life which are themselves shaped by *Bildung* that 'unassimilated residues' of the evolution of those very same aspects out of mere nature can show up. Hence the thought is not that we can find a 'sphere of instincts' intact below the rational mind, but rather that our instincts do not, absurdly, become extinct when rationality moves in (cf. McDowell 1998f, p. 190). This is also explains why McDowell says that in a mature human being perception is 'no longer merely input to a human animal's natural motivational tendencies' (McDowell 2007a, p. 344). The natural tendency to seek for food when we are hungry does not vanish when we are initiated into language, but we gain the potential to step back and ask if this hunger is a good reason for us to eat now, as it might not be, for instance, if we are fasting. McDowell remarks that to talk of 'unassimilated residues' is one way of putting a central thought of Freud. This remark seems consistent with Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of Freud's unconscious not as a primitive causal factor, but rather as a matter of an ambivalence of the immediate

consciousness. It is an ambivalence that is the result of a lack of integration rather than a result of something from the merely animal level intruding on consciousness from the outside (SC, pp. 193-194).

In spite of these affinities between McDowell and Merleau-Ponty, it is far from obvious that Merleau-Ponty's description of an immanent meaning in our bodily behaviour is compatible with McDowell's conceptualism. A number of authors have argued that the contrary is the case and that we can build a strong case against conceptualism by exploiting Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. I now come to the second part of this thesis which will be devoted to a defence of embodied conceptualism in the face of a range of objections inspired by the work of Merleau-Ponty. I shall first deal with objections concerning a conceptualist account of perception and then turn to challenges to an embodied conceptualism concerning bodily agency.

PART TWO
EMBODIED CONCEPTUALISM AND THE CHALLENGE OF MERLEAU-PONTY

La description de l'agir rencontre des obstacles extrêmes qui risquent de la réduire plutôt à un discours sur les difficultés de la description.

Ricoeur

Puisque nous vivons cette situation, il doit y avoir moyen de l'expliciter.

Merleau-Ponty

Hier liegt nicht eine bloß äußerliche Analogie vor, sondern radikale Gemeinsamkeit.

Husserl

CHAPTER 5
MERLEAU-PONTY ON THE PROBLEM OF PERCEPTION

5.1 Merleau-Ponty's problem of perception

5.1.1 The dichotomic structure of the problem

According to Merleau-Ponty the fundamental problem of perception is the problem of recognizing perception as an original way of knowing the world:

> Le cartésianisme comme le kantisme aurait pleinement vu le problème de la perception qui consiste en ce qu'elle est une connaissance *originaire*. (PP, p. 53).

At heart, however, the problem is not an epistemological problem. The problem is, on Merleau-Ponty's view, a transcendental and phenomenological problem. The problem is transcendental in the sense that it is a problem of how we can at all make objectivity intelligible:

> […] et la perception comme connaisance du present est le phénomène central qui rend possible l'unité du Je et avec elle l'idée de l'objectivité et de la vérité. (PP, p. 55).

The transcendental problem of perception is the problem of making it intelligible how perception can constitute the openness to the world that makes thoughts with empirical content possible. We find a variant of Minimal Empiricism in Merleau-Ponty's work when he states that we must be able to *describe* perception as the phenomenon that first gives us access to truth and thereby once and for all grounds our notion of truth (PP, xi). Merleau-Ponty maps out a dialectic oscillation between the thesis of Empiricism and the anti-thesis of Intellectualism as the symptoms of an adherence to the framework of what he terms 'Objective Thought'.

Empiricism rests on a scientific monism which takes the world to consist in the totality of spatio-temporal events standing in merely causal relations (PP, p. 50). Its fundamental mistake is the attempt to insert perception in nature as just one among such merely causally related events (SC, p. 208). Rationality is reduced to a lucky chance of nature (*hasard heureux*) and it becomes unintelligible how the norms of rationality could have any objective validity and how perception could be world-disclosing (PP. p. 73, Merleau-Ponty 1969a, p. 2). Intellectualism conceives of the

world as a system of absolutely true thoughts, i.e. as the object of an infinite number of true judgements (PP, p. 50, SC, p. 229, n.1). The fundamental mistake of Intellectualism is that it assumes the determinate universe of science as the only true world (PP, p. 50). The result of surrendering the empirical world to natural science is the need to place meaning and norms of rationality in a sphere of truths that transcends the chain of cause and effect and the accompanying need to introduce the idea of a transcendental acosmic subject (Merleau-Ponty 1969a, p. 7, PP, p. 32). This is what Merleau-Ponty calls logicism and what McDowell terms rampant Platonism (MW, p. 92). The problem of intellectualism is, borrowing a phrase from McDowell, how we human beings can be thought capable of latching onto the inhuman meaning structures. The crux is the bastard notion of the empirical self (PP, p. 68); a self that qua empirical must be entirely inside nature but qua self must be entirely outside nature.

Empiricism and Empiricism are said both to operate within the framework of Objective Thought. Objective Thought is characterized by a metaphysical presumption which Merleau-Ponty calls the prejudice of determinate being (PP, p. 62, n. 2). Though Merleau-Ponty does not explicitly identify the prejudice of the determinacy of being with Scientistic Naturalism, it is clear that the prejudice is part and parcel of the idea that what exists is what science can determinate, taking the mathematical laws of physics as paradigmatic (PP, pp. 57, 66).

Merleau-Ponty's critique of Empiricism and of Intellectualism is primarily a phenomenological critique. He criticizes the views on perception implied in the two positions for not being true to the way the world is actually presented to us in perception. As I mentioned in the beginning of *Chapter 2* phenomenological observations are also part of the motivation for the relational account of perception. McDowell criticizes the common factor view of perception for making 'the most conspicuous phenomenological fact there is' unintelligible, namely the fact that perceptual experiences purport to be of the world (McDowell 1998a, p. 243). This was what I called the deeper version of Minimal Empiricism, which states that in order for it to be intelligible that perceptual appearances can purport to be of the world, we need to see the world itself as being directly manifest in the appearance. The first version of Minimal Empiricism was the idea that in order to make the empirical content of beliefs intelligible we need to see perception as the place where the world can prove us wrong. Merleau-Ponty argues that we find normative relations at an even deeper level of perception than the level of conceptual content. He further argues that without

recognition of such a perception-specific configuration of meaning we will not be able to make intentionality as such intelligible. This idea we can identify as the idea of a Minimal Empiricism at a level of perception that is deeper than the level of perceptual appearances with object-dependent conceptual content.

5.1.2 The shortcomings of Empiricism and Intellectualism

Merleau-Ponty primarily criticizes Empiricism and Intellectualism for not being able to account for the specific kind of meaning-structure characteristic of our perceptual experiences. Examples of such meaning structures are the figure-ground relation investigated by Gestalt psychology and the relation between a perceived object and the perspectival profiles through which the object is perceived explored by Husserl (SC, p. 201). The focus on the specific kind of meaning-configurations we experience in perception marks a distinct difference to McDowell's approach. For Merleau-Ponty the transcendental problem of perception is first and foremost a phenomenological problem.

The problem facing Empiricism is that the experience of what we can isolate in perception is dependent on the perceptual context and we therefore cannot make sense of the idea of isolated sense data as the building blocks of perception. Empiricism is faced with a dilemma. Either it claims that the pure impressions are imperceptible or it turns to a wholly behaviorist conception of the project of an objective science of subjectivity (PP, p. 18).[89] The first option makes the idea of pure impressions unthinkable (*impassable*) (PP, p. 10). The second option faces the problem Merleau-Ponty discusses in his first book: the observation of behaviour depends on the inseparable link between the Gestalt-organization of the observed behaviour and the Gestalt-organization of the perception of behaviour. The unbreakable link makes it impossible to feign ignorance of consciousness in favour of a purely objective representation of behaviour (SC, p. 199).[90] Empiricism fails to make the inherent

[89] Quine's naturalization of epistemology is an example of the behaviouristic turn of Empiricism. Quine claims to go beyond the discussion on whether sense-data or Gestalt has epistemic priority by replacing the concept of sense-data with the concept of observational sentences, i.e. sentences with a constant causal connection between stimuli and judgments manifest in behaviour (Quine 1969, p. 76).

[90] The structure of the argument is similar to McDowell's arguments against a Dummettian full-blooded Theory of Meaning: the idea of a full-blooded Theory of Meaning involves the absurd idea of an observer who from a position in 'cosmic exile' reconstructs a Theory of Meaning solely by observation of the behaviour of the speakers. The observer of the expressivity-neutral behaviour must either rely on her own private understanding and we get a Psychologism of meaning or she must rely on a previous intersubjective understanding, but if the Theory of Meaning is to be full-blooded this cannot be presupposed and we get Behaviourism (cf. McDowell 1987).

meaning-structure of perception intelligible because it starts out with the idea of pure sensations. The *Myth of the Given* is the myth of the possibility of a bare presence with no conceptual content having a rational bearing on beliefs. What Merleau-Ponty calls the *Myth of Sensations* is the myth of the possibility of pure sensations with no internal structure or meaning nevertheless coming together and providing us with the perceptual experiences we actually enjoy (SC, p. 179).

Intellectualism attempts to amend the empiricist model by introducing an autonomous faculty of judgment which is said to synthesize the given manifold in representations with conceptual content. As such intellectualism feeds on the *reductio ad absurdum* of Empiricism, just like Coherentism in McDowell's analysis is an intelligible response to the disclosure of the idea of the Given as a myth (PP, p. 40). The idea of Coherentism figures in the dialectics of Merleau-Ponty as well. He criticizes Intellectualism for constructing a picture of perception that obliterates the common sense distinction between perceiving and judging (PP, pp. 58, 64). It is precisely the effacement of such a distinction which Coherentism embraces. Most often Intellectualism is represented by Cartesianism and a Kantian Criticism. Cartesianism takes consciousness to be a completely self-disclosed sphere, which therefore must be of a different nature than the sensuous input, the *hylé*, which in turn must be a material thing. The consequence is that it becomes unthinkable how the mind can ever meet the material world (PP, p. 278). Criticism is a Kantian version of Intellectualism that denies that our judgements are caused by the objective world's impingements on our bodies, but maintains that we need a transcendental notion of sensuous content to supplement the idea of the conceptual scheme provided by the transcendental subject (SC, p. 216, PP, p. 319, n. 1). Here the total dismissal of the dualism of scheme and content figures indirectly as the absurd position from which Criticism recoils. The motivation behind Criticism is the thought that without the ideal if not real separability of conceptual form and perceptual material we would lack the resources needed to recognize that the world we experience is not of our making through and through. The result is that it inherits the problem of making sense of the meaning-structures inherent in perception. Intellectualism begins with the idea of blind intuitions and therefore its compensatory attempt ends in empty concepts (PP, p. 41).

Merleau-Ponty's analysis of the dialectic movement between of Empiricism and Intellectualism bears striking similarities to McDowell's analysis of the oscillation between the Myth of the Given and the recoil positions of Kantian

transcendental idealism and Coherentism. The two authors differ, however, in their responses to the exposed dilemmas. Merleau-Ponty urges that we can only escape the dialectic predicament if we can bring ourselves in a position to recognize that the *sensible signs* and their *meaning* are not even ideally separable (PP, p. 48). McDowell urges that we will only be able to dismount the restless seesaw if we can get a firm grip on the thought that receptivity does not make even a notionally separable contribution to the co-operation of *receptivity* and *spontaneity* that constitutes a perceptual experience (MW, p. 9). What McDowell refers to here is of course not the idea that in order to avoid the Myth of the Given we must deny any distinction between perception and judgment, that would be a recoil into Coherentism. The idea he rejects is the idea of pure sensations, i.e. sensations that are intelligible in separation from the involvement of conceptual capacities in perception. Merleau-Ponty's argues that once we reject the idea of pure sensations we become able to make a phenomenologically sound distinction between *passivity* and *spontaneity* because we no longer find ourselves compelled to introduce a *synthetic activity* of Kantian understanding (*entendement*/*Verstand*) in order to account for *sui generis* perceptual meaning (PP, p. 65). He claims that in perception we find an original kind of meaning and a unique kind of unity, i.e. the unity of the singular object in its bodily presence (*présence charnelle*, PP, p. 127). If we try to make sense of perceptual meaning by appeal to the conceptual capacities that constitute our spontaneity we will, according to Merleau-Ponty, commit a fallacy inversely proportional to the naturalistic fallacy. We will infer how perception *is* from how it *ought* to be: the content of perception must be conceptual otherwise it will not be able to make our conceptual knowledge possible (PP, p. 48). The critical question for McDowell's conceptualism is whether it commits such a fallacy and thereby irrevocably distorts the phenomenology of perception eventually making objectivity as such inconceivable.

5.2 McDowell's new version of conceptualism

5.2.1 The idea of intuitional content

In a recent paper McDowell has changed his view on perception on two points (McDowell 2008, p. 3). I shall focus on the second of these changes and term the new

conception of perceptual content embodied conceptualism.[91] I will try to demonstrate that this change can be understood as motivated by a recognition of a kind of deep Minimal Empiricism, comparable to the one suggested by Merleau-Ponty.

The second of the assumptions McDowell now thinks he was wrong to make is the assumption that the content of perception is propositional. He still urges that the content of perception is conceptual through and through but he thinks he was mistaken to conceive of it as also propositional. It is not propositional because propositional content is *discursive* whereas what McDowell now calls *intuitional* content is not. To say that propositional content is discursive is a way of expressing the thought that when a subject has an experience with propositional content he 'puts significances together', i.e. the subject's conceptual capacities are exercised in a synthetic activity that brings them together so as to give unity to the proposition. When I think the demonstrative thought, 'That is an ice cube', I synthesize a demonstrative concept and the concept of an ice cube in a predicative judgement. The same concepts can be used in other judgements such as, 'An ice cube can melt' or, 'That was not an ice cube after all'. The fact that we can only understand a propositional attitude in terms of a discursive activity that gives unity to the content does not mean that such activity is carried out as a voluntary activity of the subject. To suggest so would be to introduce the Mythology of Activity that Husserl warns against when he introduces the term intentional act as a term equivalent to that of an intentional experience (Husserl 1992b, p. 393). The term 'discursive activity' reflects the fact that we can only understand a subject's understanding of a propositional content in terms of her possession of the concepts which contribute to the meaning of the proposition, but which could also contribute to the meaning of an infinity of other propositions comprehensible to the subject.

In contrast to propositional content the content of perception is not discursive. That the intuitional content is not discursive is shown by the fact that the content of an experience typically exceeds the grasp of the actual discursive conceptual

[91] As will be evident from what follows the change I focus on has already found inchoate expression in earlier of McDowell's writings. The first change McDowell makes is that he no longer thinks that all perceptually based non-inferential knowledge must be knowledge with a content that is given in the perception on which it is based. He accepts Charles Travis' point that we can non-inferentially know that for instance a bird is a cardinal, though what is given in perception as such is no different from what could be given to a person who lacks the concept of a cardinal. Contrary to Travis he insists that perception has content proper. This might be more of a settling of a previously open question than a change of mind (cf. McDowell 2002a, p. 280).

capacities of the perceiver (2007a, p. 347, 2008, p. 6). I might be presented with an ice cube that is purplish, but I don't possess the concept 'purplish' and in fact I have never seen a colour like the one I see just now. This does not show that the content of my perception is non-conceptual. I can introduce a new discursive conceptual capacity which has a content just as specific as the content of my visual experience via a demonstrative reference: 'the ice cube is coloured thus' (MW, p. 57, 2006c, p. 7). What it does show is that we cannot understand the content of perception as a content that depends on my actual discursive conceptual repertoire. That the perceptually given is nevertheless given in a conceptual form is reflected in the fact that to enjoy the experience is to be rationally entitled to a belief with for instance the content that the ice cube is coloured thus. Such a demonstratively based belief makes an aspect of the very content of perception the content of a proposition. The content of the demonstrative is dependent on the actual content of perception, but the content of perception is not dependent on an actual discursive conceptual capacity. For the intuitional content to be conceptual content it is enough that the subject *could* make it the content of demonstratively based concept (McDowell 2008, p. 8).

5.2.2 Objectifying and non-objectifying modes of perception

In order to make an aspect of the perceptually given the content of a discursive conceptual capacity we need to 'carve' it out from the perceptually given (McDowell 2007a, p. 347, 2008, p. 7).[92] The metaphor of 'carving out' might seem to suggest that we begin with an unorganized given on which we bring our conceptual tool to work. That would be the Myth of the Given. What is registered by the metaphor is a distinction between 'having something in view' and the kind of attending to aspects of what one has in view which is needed in order to make the aspects of the content the content of a judgment (McDowell 2008, p. 4).[93] Even in the case where I do possess the concept needed to express the content of my perception in thought I still need to carve it

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[92] In the rest of this chapter I try to develop the ideas proposed by McDowell in 'Avoiding the Myth of the Given' (2008). I am not claiming that the position I develop under the name of embodied conceptualism is necessarily something McDowell is committed to.

[93] The distinction has been present in McDowell's work long before he came to the conclusion that it has negative consequences for the idea that perceptual content is propositional. In the Woodbridge lectures it figures as a distinction between the intuitional content of a perceptual experience and the 'specific way' a subject can *direct* a demonstrative 'at the ostensible layout of the ostensibly seen environment' (McDowell 1998j, p. 459). McDowell does not use the word 'attending' as synonym for 'carving out' and as I shall try to show there are good reasons to be careful when using the term.

out in order for my thought to be a thought about the particular object or property (McDowell 2008, p. 7).

I think we can express at least one aspect of the distinction McDowell makes between 'having in view' or 'intuiting' and 'carving out' by exploiting Husserl's distinction between having something in the minds eye (*im geistigen Auge Haben*) and grasping that something (*Erfassen*) (Husserl 1992a, §38). [94] The distinction is not a distinction between what appears as the background and what appears as a figure on the background or between what is in the periphery and what my gaze is focused on. I can have my gaze fixed on an object without grasping the object, i.e. without carving out any features of the object and consequently without demonstratively referring to the object. I can be absorbed in thought and while thinking my eyes can take a stroll. My gaze wanders purposeless from one object to another, the objects appear as figures on a background and glide back into the background as my gaze moves from the flowers in the window to the chimney on a rooftop and further until I simply look into the open sky with no objects figuring in my view. Such *Gestaltung* or configuration of objects on a background is not a product of my grasping the object.

Husserl stresses that the grasping is not another intentional experience but a modification of an intentional experience which is already directed towards an object. It is such modification which makes conceptual apprehending and predication of the object possible (Husserl 1992a, p. 77). According to Husserl it is essential for all intentional experiences that merely have an object in eye (*im blick des geistigen Gerichtetsein*) that they can undergo such a modification and be turned into a grasping or a taking notice (*bemerken*/*auf-etwas-achten*). With Husserl we can term the two modes of intentionality a non-objectifying and an objectifying mode of intentionality. Through the objectification we make the full intentional object, i.e. the content of the experience, present as an object that can serve as the substratum of conceptual apprehending and predication.

When I say we can at least capture an aspect of the distinction McDowell makes by exploiting Husserl's distinction it is because 'having something in view' for McDowell does not only cover the experiences of objects that Husserl characterizes as an actually lived through experience. Presumably the term also covers the way objects

[94] The distinction does not pertain to perception alone, but is a perfectly general distinction which also pertains to our inner life.

are given in what Husserl calls the outer horizon of the object to which we are for the moment attending. Such objects in the outer horizon are given in what Husserl calls non-actual (*inaktuelle*) intentional experiences. The objects given in the horizon are equally given in a non-objectifying mode of awareness and it is this broad notion of a non-objectifying mode of presentation which I take to be equivalent with McDowell's idea of having something in view, i.e. an experience with intuitional content. Merleau-Ponty, following Husserl, says that perceiving an object is either having the object in the margin of the visual field and having the *capacity* to fixate it or it is *actually* responding to the solicitation of the objects by fixating them (PP, p. 81). As Husserl, Merleau-Ponty stresses that the objects in the margin are given as potential objects for my actual intentional life. Both the object in the margin and the object as fixated can be presented in a non-objectifying mode of experiencing. Not only is fixating an object in perceptual experience not sufficient for carving out aspects of the intuitional content, I think we need to acknowledge that it is not even necessary. I can be attending to objects in the periphery of my visual field while having my gaze fixated on an object. Such attending will not allow me to exploit the full content of what is given in the horizon of the object I fixate, but it will allow me to carve out some aspects and exploit these in judgements. The distinction between an object's givenness in an actual act of fixating and an objects givenness as a potential object in the horizon is orthogonal to the distinction between an objectifying and a non-objectifying mode of experiencing.

Several of McDowell's phenomenologically inclined critics have argued that what is given in the margin must be given in a non-conceptual way. In response McDowell urges that the issue of whether something is focally given or not is irrelevant to the question of whether the content is conceptual or not (McDowell 2002a, p. 283, p. 278). What matters is whether a feature is *available* to serve as rational input to one's doxastic rationality (McDowell 2006d, p. 133). The intuitional content 'embodies an immediate potential' for exploitation in judgements ((McDowell 2008, p. 9). The potential need not be actualised in order for the content to constitute a rational entitlement to a belief with a content that would express the intuitional content discursively. With the distinctions I made above we can say that the availability of intuitional content for thought is dependent on having the content given in a non-objectified perceptual mode of appearance. Further we can say that having one's gaze focused on an object is neither necessary nor sufficient for the actual carving out of intuitional content related to an object in view.

5.2.3 The dispute concerning the primacy of perception

With the distinctions above we can formulate what I take to be the fundamental disagreement between McDowell's embodied conceptualism and Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the transcendental problem of perception. Let me first state the main claims of Embodied conceptualism in order to contrast these with Merleau-Ponty's view on perception.

Embodied conceptualism claims that what is given in intuition is conceptual content. Intuitional content embodies an immediate potential for true thoughts about the sector of the world one has in view. According to embodied conceptualism Kant expressed a real insight when he said that the same function that gives unity to the representations of judgements also gives unity to the synthesis of various representations (McDowell 2008, p. 4). The same function gives unity to the discursive activity of joining concepts together in propositions and to the objects given in the intuition. To give a name to this function we can exploit Kant's notion of spontaneity. Spontaneity is a name for the function that both allows for our free, responsible judgments and for our capacity to have the world in view in intuition. Spontaneity is a general term that covers both our practical and our theoretical rationality and as such it is a name for our capacity to respond to reasons as reasons and to critically asses the credentials of putative reasons. In order to explain the nature of intuitional content there is no way around an appeal to the perceiving subjects discursive conceptual capacities. Intuitional content is the content that could become the content of a possible true judgement made by the subject to whom the intuitional content is given.

Merleau-Ponty argues that in order to accommodate Minimal Empiricism at its deepest level we need to uncover a primordial operation which is presupposed by all logical mediation among which he clearly includes any possible non-inferential perceptual judgements (PP, p. 52). The primordial operation is said to *impregnate* the sensible with meaning and perception is said to be a *grasping* of a meaning immanent in the sensible before any judgement (PP, pp. 43-44). The claim is that we must recognize the original meaning and intentionality of perception if we are to make it intelligible how intentionality understood as the 'aboutness' characteristic of our thinking is at all possible. As such this claim does not necessarily diverge from the claims of embodied

conceptualism. However, Merleau-Ponty goes further, and claims that we must recognize a primordial operation distinct from the synthetic operations of Kantian spontaneity in order to make the *sui generis* perceptual meaning intelligible (PP, p. 65). With a Husserlian expression Merleau-Ponty calls the intentionality of perception operating intentionality (*fungierende Intentionalität*, PP, pp. xiii, 478). Merleau-Ponty insists on the need to give prerogative to perceptual meaning in our attempt to tackle the transcendental problem of perception.[95] In contrast embodied conceptualism insists on the need to regard the function operating in perception as 'essentially a faculty for discursive activity, a power to judge' (McDowell 2008a, p. 7). From the standpoint of Merleau-Ponty the commitment of embodied conceptualism will appear as a misleading prejudice: Embodied conceptualism is blind to the original meaning of perception. The original meaning of perception is not the meaning which is immediately available for thought. There is an original grasping of perceptual meaning which conditions the grasping McDowell calls a carving out. The perceptual field organizes itself in meaningful ways as we move our gaze around and as we move though our environment. It is this organization of the perceptual field in its intrinsic relation to our bodily movements which Merleau-Ponty claims must be understood on its own terms. The only alternative, he claims, is to understand it within the framework of Objective Thought and this will ultimately undermine our notion of truth and objectivity as such.

I shall argue that such an objection raised from the view-point of Merleau-Ponty expresses a genuine insight but that it is possible to accommodate this insight within embodied conceptualism. The insight is that perceptual meaning possesses a relative autonomy in relation to our beliefs and our judgements and that this relative autonomy is essential for perception as world-disclosing and consequently crucial to recognize in order to hold on to Minimal Empiricism. We need to recognize an internal normative organisation of the perceptual field as distinct from the normative organisation of our web of beliefs. I am inclined to believe that unless we can do this without compromising the idea that what is behind the configuration is the same function that provides the unity of judgements we will be unable to make sense of the

[95] This priority of perception also serves a methodological purpose. Merleau-Ponty sees, just like Husserl, a radical commonality between the mode of givenness that the phenomenological method is to provide and the perceptual mode of givenness (Merleau-Ponty 1989, pp. 67-68). *Phénoménologie de la perception* is to familiarize us with the new method developed through its application on a phenomenon that itself serves to elucidate the essence of the method (PP, p. 278).

carving out made possible by the configuration as world-disclosing. Carving out would end up in mere confusion. It would be like the 'fumbling of blind finger-ends in an overcrowded pocket' (Samuel Butler 2006 [1890]).

Before I turn to a discussion of some of Merleau-Ponty's arguments for the need to assume a primordial operation of perception I shall show how McDowell's idea of intuitional content provide the resources for countering some substantial objections to conceptualism.

5.3 Challenges to Embodied Conceptualism

5.3.1 New answers to old objections

The distinction between intuitional content and discursive content allows for a new answer to what Bermúdez has called the master argument against conceptualism (Bermúdez 2007, pp. 61-63). The argument proceeds as follows. Any account of perceptual content must be able to account for the possibility of a familiar sort of mistakes in which we have a colour presented in full view but nevertheless make false judgement about the colour we see. In order to account for the possession conditions for basic observational concepts such as colour concepts we must ascribe a discriminatory capacity to the subject. In order to possess the concept 'red' one must be able to discriminate between red and other colours when they are presented in perception. Conceptualism claims that the content of an experience which make it appropriate to apply the concept 'red' can only be specified by adverting to the very same concept whose application the experience makes appropriate. The content of the perception in which we exercise our discriminatory ability is already conceptual. If this is so the 'slip of thought' Bermúdez refers to can only be a mere verbal mistake and not a mistake in judgment. If it was a mistake in judgment we would need to see the subject as both accepting that something is red and not accepting it as red at the same time and in the same respect. This we cannot say of any person and maintain that the person is sane. However, we do make such mistakes in full sanity and the mistakes can enter our reasoning and lead us to further false beliefs. Hence the conclusion of the master argument: Conceptualism is false.

The conclusion does not follow on embodied conceptualism. We can distinguish between having something in view and grasping the propositional content made available in the intuitional content we have in view. McDowell adheres to Frege's rationality constraint on senses. Senses, i.e. concepts, must be sufficiently fine-grained

to make sure that we need not describe rational subjects as for instance believing one thing and at the same time disbelieving the same thing (McDowell 2004, p. 100, MW, p. 180). If we assume that what is given in perception is already propositional content such content would involve Fregean senses. Even if we think, as McDowell does, that senses can be object-dependent when based on demonstrative reference this will not provide an answer to the master argument. With embodied conceptualism we can account for the possibility of the relevant mistakes because the requirement of general transparency of sameness and differences in content-elements of a rational mind pertain only to our thinking not to the content of our perception. Perceiving is not grasping thoughts because perception does not have propositional content. What we need in order to accommodate slip of thoughts is the distinction between carving out and applying a concept. Even if I am directed towards something with the colour red in the objectifying mode of carving out this is merely a preparation of the intuitional content for thought. Carving out is not transforming the intuitional content into propositional content; it is modifying the experience and changing the mode of givenness of intuitional content. I can be directed towards a red colour in an objectifying mode of experience and mistakenly apply the concept 'green'. This is not an instance of momentary madness it is simply an instance of failing to make my thoughts appropriately responsible to the world. Such mistakes are in principle no different from the mistake in the tie shop I discussed in *Chapter 1*. In the example of the tie shop the lighting conditions are falsely believed to obscure the appearance of colours. In such a case, McDowell argued, we can, by virtue of the content of perception, have a rational entitlement to a belief we refuse because we think we have reason not to endorse it. I the case of Bermúdez' slip of thought we are equally entitled to a belief only we fail to take advantage of our entitlement and this time for no reason at all. There may be excuses for such mistakes, one may be very tired or under a lot of stress, but the fact that there is no reason for the belief does not make it unintelligible as belief. Just as we may acquire true beliefs passively without ever making up our minds simply by travelling perceptually through space, we may also acquire false beliefs by actively making up our minds when the mistake is staring us in the face.

The distinction between seeing that P and believing that P to which McDowell appealed in his debate with Davidson on the belief-independence of perceptual content is now made via the distinction between having something in view and actively forming a belief (McDowell 2008, p. 11). As we say in *chapter 1* (section

1.5) it was in the debate with Davidson that McDowell used the example of the tie shop with lighting conditions that are falsely believed to obscure the appearance of colours. Stroud has argued that in such case we still have a belief about the appearance of the colour, which might better be called an endorsement or an acceptance (Stroud 2002). To this McDowell replied that we need an idea of perception as something in which there is no attitude of acceptance at all, but only an *invitation* to adopt such an attitude (McDowell 2002a, p. 279). The distinction between having something in view and grasping a thought which articulates aspects of the intuitional content is a contribution to the development of such an idea of a non-attitudinal perception. As long as the content of perception is assumed to be propositional it is difficult to see how there is room for the idea of a distinctive normative role for perception, which does not reduce it to the role played by an acceptance of a propositional content (cf. McDowell 2008, p.10). It will seem as if Davidson's coherentism is the only available alternative to the Myth of the Given unless we turn to a full-blooded externalism of justification.

Next I will argue that the introduction of intuitional content is not just phenomenologically adequate it is of paramount importance in order to avoid problems similar to the one's McDowell diagnoses as the predicament of Coherentism.

5.3.2 An argument against propositional conceptualism

Merleau-Ponty argues that we will not be able to make sense of perception as our primary openness to the objects of the world if we assimilate perception to synthetic activity of the same kind as that of our judgements and predications (PP, p. IV, p. 24). Further he urges that if we miss out on perception we will not be able to make objectivity as such intelligible. McDowell now thinks it was a mistake to assume that perceptual content is propositional and he acknowledges the need for a *sui generis* level of perceptual content. We may ask whether it is not just a contingent, phenomenological feature that our perception does not have propositional content, presuming that this is how our perception actually is. Why should the conception of perception as object-involving and concept-involving experiences with propositional content be debarred from making sense of the openness to the world required by Minimal Empiricism?

As Merleau-Ponty observes, we often 'dream up' absent persons or imaginary objects during our wake life. Furthermore, we constantly experience reflections, creaking sounds and passing tactile stimuli, without ever doubting that they

belong to the world and not us. We may ask how this is possible if perceptual experience consists in the grasping of a Fregean thought just like thinking:

> Si la réalité de ma perception n'était fondée que sur la cohérence intrinsèque des "répresentations", elle devrait être toujours hésitante, et, livré à mes conjectures probables, je devrais à chaque moment défaire des synthèse illusioires et réintégrer au reel des phénomènes aberrants que j'en aurais d'abord exclus. (PP, p. v).

The defender of propositional attitudes might answer that what makes perception a special kind of attitude is that it consists is a passive actualization of discursive capacities in sensuous awareness. Seeing a pink ice cube is a conceptual shaping of visual consciousness (cf. McDowell 1998j, pp. 442, 460). Furthermore, the defender might say, the actualization of such capacities is world-involving and not just some inner representation. The question, however, is what meaning such a position could possibly give to the idea that perceptual content is world-involving.

On the propositional view the content of perception is dependent on the actualization of discursive capacities in propositional unities. We only have the capacities we have, consequently what can be given in perception is limited to the concepts we have. But this cannot be right since obviously what is given in perception can exceed my actual conceptual repertoire. We might appeal to the possibility of demonstrative reference in order to explain the richness of our experience. What is it we can point out in such demonstrative references? It must be something that is already given to us otherwise our pointing would be blind. If it is given it must on this picture be given by virtue of actual discursive capacities. Consequently a demonstrative reference can only be a way of pointing to an aspect of the propositional content that we are already saddled with. The only alternative is to appeal to a non-conceptual given which could provide the surplus meaning that can take us beyond the propositional content provided by the involuntary coming together of concepts on stock.[96]

If this argument is cogent the propositional position as such is not attractive. It is not just that it cannot accommodate a contingent feature of the phenomenology of perception on such an account. Just as Coherentism it faces the

[96] It is a line of argument similar to the one above that leads Campbell to the conclusion that a relational view of perception must deny that the content of perception is propositional (Campbell 2002, p. 124). Campbell, however, further concludes that the perceptual relation to the object must therefore be non-conceptual. The carving out is what Campbell refers to as attentional highlighting.

problem of making it intelligible how perception can be the place where we can let the world manifest itself to us.[97] In fact once it dissociates itself from the Myth of the Given it seems to become indistinguishable from Coherentism. On such a picture we cannot make sense of perception as genuinely world-involving and we will be faced with the problems of the common factor view of perception, without the option of a disjunctivism of appearances. The world as the inexhaustible reservoir from which objects appear has been reduced to the infinity of true propositions comprehensible by the subject on the basis of her present conceptual repertoire (PP, p. 396). The world is a firm fabric (*tissu solide*) which cannot be recaptured by a web of beliefs once it is lost as phenomenon (PP, pp. V, XII). Without the possibility of perception substantiating the content of propositions they cannot be pictured as interpenetrating cogwheels; they are spinning in the void.

I now return to the challenge posed by Merleau-Ponty's elucidation of phenomena he takes to show the need to assume an operating intentionality irreducible to the workings of spontaneity. The crucial question will be whether embodied conceptualism can accommodate the phenomena that Merleau-Ponty argues we need to recognize if we are to establish a vantage point from where we can get an unimpeded view of our openness to the world.

5.3.3 The challenge of real hallucination and the challenge of perceptual illusions

Merleau-Ponty criticises both Empiricism and Intellectualism for not being able to account for the possibility of perceptual illusions and hallucinations as they occur in real life in contrast to the hallucinations of the philosopher's imagination (PP, pp. 340-344, 385-397). The general problem is that within the framework of Objective Thought such phenomena has to be explained either as a mix up at the level of input to the mind, i.e. as a purely causal deficiency or the mistake must be located in our judgements.

According to the intellectualist, here represented by Cartesianism, the existence of consciousness coincides with consciousness of existence and there is no distinction between appearance and reality (PP, pp. 340, 387). All truths and nothing but

[97] McDowell doesn't explicitly endorse this negative transcendental claim in his "Avoiding the Myth of the Given" (2008). When he claims that an experience *typically* exceeds the grasp of the actual discursive capacities of the perceiver, this does not imply that the negative transcendental claim is false (2007a, p. 347, 2008, p. 6). What might be merely 'typical' is not that the content of perception is non-discursive, but that the non-discursively given exhausts our actual discursive conceptual repertoire.

the truths about consciousness must be revealed to consciousness itself. The consequence is that a hallucination, if it is a fundamental kind of experience, must be accessible through and through to the subject who undergoes the hallucination. On such a view it is excluded that my hallucinations are perceptions without objects and that my perceptions are veridical hallucinations (PP, p. 340). In other words, if hallucinations and illusions designate fundamental kinds of experiences we must provide a disjunctive analysis of appearances. But if hallucinations were accessible in the way Cartesianism claims our subjectivity is then they should immediately dissolve, in fact the very idea of a hallucination becomes unintelligible (PP, pp. 341, 387). We are in the hopeless predicament of trying to account for the possibility of misidentifying objects constituted by ourselves (PP, p. 388).

The alternative is to take the object of a genuine perception to be immanent to consciousness, in the sense of a mind-dependent object. The immanence of the object in turn makes hallucinations and perceptions in principle indistinguishable from the subject's point of view (PP, p. 340). The essence of hallucinations becomes a highest common factor shared with genuine perceptual experiences. If such indistinguishability is the nature of hallucinations we have made the experience of truth unintelligible (PP, p. 341). On this picture the truth or falsity of an experience cannot consist in a subjectively recognisable relation to an exterior reality, it must be readable from a veridicality-neutral 'intrinsic denominator' if it is to be recognisable at all (PP, p. 387). Because all we have to go on is a highest common factor shared by genuine experiences and hallucinations we cannot make sense of the idea of ever having an experience that reveals the world. This is the problem I, when expounding McDowell's disjunctivism, expressed by saying that if we start out with something less than factive experiences it is a hopeless enterprise to re-claim our right to trust any appearance (*Chapter 2*, *section 2.6*). We are caught between a rationalism that makes hallucination unthinkable and a scepticism that not only makes knowledge seem impossible, it dissolves into an absurdism which empties the very idea of an appearance for meaning (PP, pp. 341-342):

> Dire que, dans la conscience, apparence et réalité ne font qu'un ou dire qu'elles sont séparées, c'est rendre impossible la conscience de quoi que ce soit, meme à titre d'apparence. (PP, p. 342).

Minimal Empiricism is undermined as the transcendental problem of perception flourishes in the hands of Cartesianism.[98]

Merleau-Ponty argues that the fact that the hallucinating person can recognize his hallucination as something different from a veridical perception but nevertheless cannot put it to rest as a mere imagination highlights an essential feature of the perceptual *logos* (PP, p. 419).[99] What makes the mode appearance of the hallucination distinguishable from a veridical perception is that it does not appear as *accessible* to further perceptual exploration (PP, pp. 390-391). The hallucination is not experienced as played out on the same scene as the objects around us because it does not respond to our movements by revealing new aspects in line with our sensory anticipations. When I go closer to an object I experience the details of the object unfolding until I get so close that the object itself blocks my view. The continuous unfolding of the perceptual world contrasts with the hallucination which, Merleau-Ponty says, lacks the thickness of perceptual reality and carries an implicit and inarticulate meaning. Cartesianism cannot accommodate such ghostlike appearances. Either the hallucination is in its essence no different from a genuine perception and must be indistinguishable qua experience from a genuine perception or the hallucination is a *sui generis* 'cogitatio' and should loose its grip the moment it appears in the mind of the subject who suffers the hallucination. Merleau-Ponty concludes that the relation between appearance and reality must already be ambiguous in normal perception if we are to make sense of the possibility of hallucinations (PP, pp. 340, 388). Normal perception itself is implicit and presumptive (PP, p. 395).

The fact that normal perception is inherently ambiguous is according to Merleau-Ponty revealed by the possibility of what Siewert has called 'phenomenally corrigible illusion' (Siewert 2005, p. 283). Such mistakes are distinct from the slips of the mind Bermúdez appealed to in the master argument. They are 'slips of perception' made before any judgement and they are corrected at the level of perception itself. Here is one description of such an illusion:

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[98] There are ways a rationalist could try to get around the conclusion. For a conceptual analysis of how Empiricism and Rationalism could account for delusions see Campbell (2001).

[99] Some patients are known to argue against the reality of their ongoing hallucinations (cf. PP, p. 386).

> Si, dans un chemin creux, je crois voir au loin une large pierre plate sur le sol, qui est en realité une tache de soleil, je ne peux pas dire que je voie jamais la pierre plate au sense où je verrai en approchant la tache de soleil. La pierre plate n'apparaît, come tous les lointains, que dans un champ à structure confuse où les connexions ne son pas encore nettement articulées. (PP, p. 343).

I think such experiences are very common and once we start noticing them it is not rare we come across an example in experience.[100] Sometimes such perceptual confusion is so puzzling that we do take notice but more often they are fleeting and we are on our way before we take any further notice. Puzzle pictures are striking exploitations of the possibility of such perceptual confusion.

What do such illusions tell us about the nature of perceptual appearance? Such illusions share the feature of inarticulateness with hallucinations. In contrast to hallucinations, however, they dissolve through the process of perceptual exploration to which hallucinations are immune. They are inaccessible but the revelation of their inaccessibility for further perceptual investigation is tantamount to their disappearance. They are, as Merleau-Ponty puts it, crossed out and regarded as null and void (PP, p. 344, 396).[101] What is disturbed in the case of hallucinations is neither pure rationality nor the order of the pure impressions. What is disturbed is a trust in the world (*confiance au monde*, PP 343). It is a trust which cannot be reduced to confidence in a rationalizing hypothesis nor a blind trust in a mechanism of nature that 'operate in such a manner as is wholly beyond our comprehension' (Hume 2000, §7, Pt. I). With another Husserlian term Merleau-Ponty calls it the original perceptual faith (*la foi originaire de la perception*, *Ur-Doxa*/*Ur-Glaube* (PP, pp. 50, 66, 365, 395).

5.3.4 A response to the challenge of real hallucinations

Does the fact that hallucinations and phenomenal corrigible illusion occur embarrass embodied conceptualism? It is not obvious that it does. Let me first consider the challenge of real hallucinations.

Merleau-Ponty takes the real insight of rationalism to be the idea that there is an essential difference between hallucinations and veridical experiences (PP, p. 388).

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[100] Merleau-Ponty offers numerous examples (cf. PP, 24, p. 344). Siewert (2005) provide a number of first hand experiences of such phenomenally corrigible illusions.

[101] The 'crossing out' metaphor stems from Husserl. For an exposition of Husserl's descriptions and classification of different kinds of perceptual illusion see Kenaan (1999).

This is the insight of the disjunctive account of appearances as well. The possibility of a relational account of perception and an accompanying disjunctive analysis of appearances does not crystallize as an option in Merleau-Ponty's lay out of the dialectic situation. McDowell's disjunctive account of appearances is distinct from the Cartesian version which dissolves the notion of a hallucination in the clarity of the mind. With a relational account of experience we can deny that consciousness is unambiguously revealed to itself without falling into the arms of scepticism. The ambiguity is what is registered in the ambiguity of the term appearance and it is the reason why the notion needs a disjunctive analysis. There is room for an account that allows experience to embrace the world and makes the experience dependent on an actual relation to an exterior, mind-independent object. What this requires, according to embodied conceptualism, is that we can conceive of our spontaneity as inextricably involved in the presentation of the world in perception otherwise the relation will be merely causal.

If the conceptual content of world-involving perception is claimed to be propositional the hallucinations do seem to confront conceptualism with an impasse. We would either have to place the disturbance at the level of input to the mind or at the level of propositional thought. If we place it at the level of input and take this input to be cognitively available to the subject then the input must be conceived as a non-conceptual given, otherwise we would be unable to distinguish it from a disturbance of propositional thought. The result is a recoil into the Myth of the Given. Alternatively we place the disturbance at the level of propositional thought proper. Propositional conceptualism adheres to Frege's Rationality Constraint on the ascription of understanding of concepts. How are we to make sense of the propositional attitude purported to be involved when the subject suffers a hallucination? If it is an attitude of doubt whether the given propositional content is the content of a perception it is hard to make sense of the anxiety it causes in the mind of the patient. Further if the patient does recognize that the content of the hallucination is not a true proposition about the real world and has a clear idea of what the real world is, i.e. the world perception gives access to, how are we to characterise the propositional attitude involved in hallucination? If the patient does not have an intact mind it could according to propositional conceptualism mean that the rationality constraint no longer applies. Accordingly it could be claimed that the patient both believe that the hallucinatory appearance is a perception and disbelief that such is the case. But this misses the phenomenon. The patient has not lost his mind completely. The hallucinating subject

can recognize that it is impossible that a rat can come out of the mouth and thereby re-enter the stomach but the hallucinations are not susceptible to his reasoning (cf. PP, p. 386). He is in an existential limbo.

I think that with the distinction between intuitional content and discursive content embodied conceptualism at least does not make the phenomena of hallucinations obviously unintelligible. The intelligibility of such phenomena does require the possible disintegration of the normal frictionless co-operation of spontaneity and sensibility that makes the intuitional content immediately available for thought. As Merleau-Ponty pointed out in his critique of Coherentism we do not normally confuse the perceptual world with what comes from us. In the case of hallucination something must have happened at the level of spontaneity and not just at a purely neuro-physiological level. If we think spontaneity as an *a priori* condition of perceptual experience invulnerable to the contingencies of the world it would not make sense to regard empirical hallucinations as disturbances of spontaneity. But within the picture presented by embodied conceptualism there is no reason to think of spontaneity as separate from ourselves as living human being vulnerable to our environment.

The thinking subject is not an acosmic transcendental subject constituting the conditions of possibility of appearances. The subject is an embodied agent made of flesh and blood. This does not imply that the perceiving and acting subject can be understood by the sciences that investigate the neural processes of the brain and the physiology of the body. Such a corollary only follows if we assume a scientistic monism of events. We do not need two substances in order to have two fundamentally kind of natural occurrences. As McDowell puts it in his critique of Millikan:

> Sense and reference do hang together as he [Frege] takes them to; so much the worse for the thesis that intactness in a mind is independent of semantic rationality. The assumption [that intactness in a mind is dependent on semantic rationality] is not substantive. Millikan makes it look as if it is by insisting that "the intact" mind must be healthy machinery in the head. Rather to have an intact mind *is* to be semantically rational. (McDowell 2004, 101-102).

Just because we cannot see our spontaneity as a super-mechanism made of some inconceivably rigid material it does not follow that we need to conceive of it as made up of the causal mechanisms of brain-activity as if the mind was a complicated calculating machine (cf. MW, p. 92, n. 6, PP, 22). The possibility of taking spontaneity to be

involved in the natural life of humans without reducing it to machinery in the head is precisely what is provided by the dual conception of events. Loosing one's perceptual capacities may be indistinguishable from loosing one's mind. When hallucinations are still partly distinguishable from veridical perception it is because one has only partly lost one's mind; that is what makes the prospect terrifying. It is only if we think of the mind as separable from sensibility that it becomes and all or nothing: Either it is transparent to it self and no hallucinatory appearances hiding as perceptions are possible or perception is veridical hallucinations and everything goes dark inside.

I am not claiming that this is giving a full explication of the phenomena in question. For that the description of the phenomena is to coarse-grained and the suggested possibility of accommodating it too abstract. What I claim is that, at least on the face of, embodied conceptualism does not face greater difficulties in making sense of the possibility of hallucination than does Merleau-Ponty's appeal to a perceptual faith that comes before any judgement.[102] In fact we may suggest that the normal frictionless co-operation of spontaneity and receptivity is what constitutes the phenomenon of perceptual faith.

5.3.5 A response to the challenge of phenomenal corrigible illusions

But doesn't this answer to the challenge miss the point of Merleau-Ponty's appeal to real hallucinations in contrast to the philosopher's dream of a hallucination? We constantly encounter illusions which dissolve themselves and it is just as much to accommodate this phenomenon, which also help make hallucinations conceivable, that we need to acknowledge an inherent ambiguity of appearances.[103] According to Merleau-Ponty all perceptual appearances are presumptive and carry with them their

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[102] Tim Thornton explains why such phenomena as thought insertion and multiple personality disorder are difficult to make sense of on McDowell's conception of personal identity, what he a calls an embodied narrative account using 'narrative' in a very broad sense. However, he thinks such an account fairs better than reductionist accounts because it at least can make sense of the real difficulty of providing intelligible phenomenological descriptions of such phenomena (Thornton 2004, p. 367). Since Thornton's paper McDowell has argued that his account does not disallow the very idea of multiple personal agents embodied in a single human body. Further he thinks that there could be pathological cases where we ought to recognize multiple agents for reasons that cannot be separated from ethical considerations (McDowell 2006a, pp. 119).

[103] Merleau-Ponty speaks of understanding the faith in the hallucination via the perceptual faith of normal perception and vice versa. Such mutual elucidation is a constant feature of his methodology. The blind man's cane is like an extension of his tactile sense and so function as the analogue of vision (PP, p. 167). Vision can be understood as a palpating tool and so as the analogue of the blind man's cane (PP, pp. 179, 257).

possible disjunction or exclusion from the world (*disjunction possible*, PP, p. 396). This possibility is, however, not a possible point of attack for scepticism. We can only make sense of the possibility of such illusory appearances because we do have experiences of revelations of the world, i.e. of the illusions being crossed out when they are revealed as not accessible the way the world is accessible in perception (PP, pp. 341, 396). The idea of perception as a grand illusion does not gain a foothold because it presupposes what it is supposed to demonstrate is impossible: that we actually see the world. It is in principle possible that doubt could be raised about any particular object of experience but there is a certitude surrounding the world in general (PP, pp. 344, 396).

The structure of this argument is familiar from McDowell's response to scepticism. Scepticism only has an inescapable grip on our thinking if we can make sense of appearances while assuming that it is in principle impossible that such an appearance could directly reveal how things really are. But this assumption is not a genuine possibility of thought because the notion of an appearance is parasitic on the intelligibility of appearances as direct manifestation of the world in perception. Merleau-Ponty provides a phenomenological counterpart to McDowell's negative transcendental argument. From the perspective of Merleau-Ponty, however, something is missing in McDowell's argument: a return to the phenomena themselves. The disagreement surfaces when Merleau-Ponty argues that the level of perception he seeks to elucidate through phenomenological description is unavoidably beyond the scope of an approach which sees spontaneity at work already at the most primitive level or perception. I suspect that we can only account for the deepest layer of our perception if we can see it as penetrated by spontaneity.

The phenomenon of phenomenal corrigible illusions is but one amongst the many phenomena, including dreams, hallucinations, mythical thinking, the experiences of human infants and young children, to which Merleau-Ponty draws attention. The point is to make us aware of the ambiguity of appearances and to show that we only face the irresolvable antinomy of a transparent mind and an opaque world as long as we do not question the prejudice of determinate being. I think we may have resolved the antinomy if we can see our way to regarding genuine perception as a natural empirical phenomena with conceptual intuitional content.

The phenomena Merleau-Ponty describes are to a large extent experiences of lack of self-transparency of the mind and the accompanying possibility of confusions of mind and world. A relational, conceptual conception of perception agrees that our

subjectivity is not self-disclosed. Furthermore it is stresses the contingency of our perception. We do need favours from the world in order to access it, and so we can say with Merleau-Ponty that the perceptually given is a gift of nature (PP, pp. 53, 147). Perception is not alone a co-operation of our own self-standing spontaneity and an internal mode of presentation of appearances we then call receptivity. Receptivity is the co-operation of our spontaneity and the world in perception. Sometimes the world is not immediately co-operative. Our perception can slip on the slopes of the world and so for a moment spontaneity is spinning in a void.

In his description of the illusion of the flat stone on the path Merleau-Ponty claims that we are not entitled to say that we don't see the illusory flat stone in the same way as we see the patch of sunlight when the illusion dissolves. But this seems wrong. We do not see the flat stone because there is no flat stone there. We do see the patch of sunlight which is really there. Merleau-Ponty's possible disjunction of perceptual appearances is the disjunction of appearances that purport to show us the world but are illusory and appearances that similarly purport to present the world and actually do so. Only in the latter case do we have genuine intuitional content that embodies a rational entitlement to true beliefs.

But don't we import the problems of propositional conceptualism with this talk of appearances as possessing content that can be illusory or genuine according to whether they represent the world as it really is? Is this not what Merleau-Ponty indicates when he writes as follows: 'Ma perception ne porte pas sur un contenu de conscience: elle porte sur le cendrier lui-même' (PP, p. 301). Let us take a closer look at how Merleau-Ponty describes the illusions. He writes: When walking on the path I see the illusory stone in the sense that my sensori-motor field gives the meaning 'stone on the path' to the bright patch (PP, p. 343). The sensori-motor meaning is reflected in the fact that I am already poised for the sensation of the smooth and solid surface under my foot (*je m'apprête à sentir*). The sense in which such perception is not distinguishable from non-illusory seeing is the sense in which everything seen from sufficiently far away is not poisedly articulated (*nettement articulées*). I think Merleau-Ponty is right to say that we have bodily anticipations of the sensible experiences and that such anticipation might be constitutive for the illusory appearances. Once on the way out of my apartment I suddenly checked my closing the door because I noticed the light was still on. I was already on the way into my bedroom to turn of the light when my project dissolved before I could take the first step. It was a bright patch of sunlight on the wall that had

appeared to me as ‘light on in the bedroom’. In such experiences it is not just a perception that is crossed out it is a practical project that is revealed as groundless.

One reason as to why it is hard to recognize such perceptual illusions as conceptual is that they are so indeterminate and tend to dissolve when we look closer. However, when we articulate the meaning of such illusory appearances as ‘stone on the path’ or ‘light on in the bedroom’ we are articulating the meaning. We are not articulating it in a propositional form and according to embodied conceptualism we are right not to do so when we are trying to capture the phenomenon of intuitional content. The fact that the content is not propositional does not imply that it is non-conceptual. The very fact that we speak of a correction at the level of perception and of a crossing out of an appearance while replacing it with another indicates that there is a sense in which the experience was representational. The illusory experience represents the world in a misleading way and the dissolution and replacement with a veridical perception leads us back on track. There is, as Merleau-Ponty describes, a normativity of perceptual appearances which works with a certain relative autonomy in relation to the normative relations of the space of propositional thought. How are to make sense of this normativity? I think we can understand it as a matter of perception disclosing the world as it is or not doing so. Further, if we want to make sense of what it means that a perception is world-disclosing we can only do so by appealing to the true beliefs such a perception invites or, as McDowell also puts it, the beliefs afforded by the perception. What is the alternative advanced by Merleau-Ponty?

5.4. Challenging phenomenological naturalism

5.4.1 The initial worry

Merleau-Ponty states that the explicit affirmation of a true proposition is more than just an immediate acceptance of undeniable evidence presented in perception. The judgement is the consequence of a rupture with the immediacy of perception and is to be understood as a *correction* of possible mistakes dependent on a previous interrogation and doubt (PP, p. 341). In an explicit judgement, it is said, we crystallize an infinite collection of motives, and consequently it is impossible to unfold all the reasons for an affirmation in their entirety (PP, pp. 342, 452). We get a picture of human beings as through and through sensuous beings whose perceptual interrogation and exploration of the world is the condition of possibility of judgements. Judgements involve a rupture with the immediacy of perceptual life that is originally motivated by

the resistance met in the perceptual unfolding of the world. On the one hand we have a perceptual 'participation' in the world and on the other hand we have the rupture of our 'complicity' with the world in which critical thought is born (PP, pp. 342, 452). The two aspects of human existence Merleau-Ponty also speaks of as the irreflexive living through of perceptual experiences and the reflection or, as we might put it, the stepping back required for us to make judgements about what we perceive.

Merleau-Ponty's conception of the relation between sensibility and spontaneity does not figure explicitly in the intellectual landscape mapped out by McDowell. In McDowell's topography we only find one possible way of denying Scientistic Naturalism, namely his own relaxed naturalism. Merleau-Ponty's position, if attainable, provides an alternative way. Mike Martin has suggested that Merleau-Ponty embraces transcendental idealism and consequently denies Thesis 1 of the pentalemma from *Chapter 1*, i.e. Experiential Naturalism (Martin 2004, p. 43). It is true that Merleau-Ponty denies that we can conceive of perception as just one natural event among others, but when he does so he speaks of nature conceived as a flux of spatio-temporal events that are merely causally related (SC, p. 208). Such a conception of nature is according to Merleau-Ponty a disfiguration of the true natural world, i.e. the world to which perception first gives access and from which the event of perception is received as a gift (PP, p. 33). Merleau-Ponty, just like McDowell, denies Scientistic Naturalism and urges the need to develop an alternative understanding nature. We can call his proposal phenomenological naturalism.

The characterisation of phenomenological naturalism I just gave above raises the immediate worry that it is really a sophisticated version of the Myth of Given. The description of perception as immediate coincidence with the sensible, which does not yet involve our spontaneity makes it hard to see how perception could be what gives us access to the world we can make true judgements about. If spontaneity is separated from the primordial operation of perception which impregnates meaning on the sensible, the thinking mind seems to receive the meaning from outside itself as input that has already been shaped by the separately working operating intentionality. But if this is the position of the mind it is in principle in a position no different from the Cartesian mind which receives input worked over by the independent mechanisms of the material body. This is obviously a position Merleau-Ponty denies he puts us in and he is acutely aware of the risk of rendering the connection between sensibility and

spontaneity unintelligible. It is such an imminent danger he notes on the last page of his first work *La structure du comportement* (1942):

> Peut-on penser la conscience perceptive sans la supprimer comme mode original, peut-on en maintenir la specificité sans rendre impensable son rapport à la conscience intellectuel? (SC, p. 241).

Merleau-Ponty's proposal is that we need to conceive of the mind (*l'esprit*) as always to a certain degree perceptual. It is only if we can recognise that the mind is permeated with pre-objective perceptual meaning that we will be able to make sense of the possibility of making mistakes in our judgements and thereby of our judgements as more than the projections of our own mind into an empty space (PP, pp. 44, 55, n. 2 (56)). The basic idea is that judgments must be understood as correction of possible mistakes made at the perceptual level. If the possible correctness of a subject's belief was to be based solely on the normativity of the space of reasons then the subject would, according to Merleau-Ponty's analysis, be in a position like Wittgenstein's obsessive truth seeker who bought a hundred copies of the same newspaper to check if the first one was telling the truth. But can we make sense of the internal normativity of perception if perception is not already permeated with concepts?

Merleau-Ponty argues that we need to make it intelligible how our judgemental capacities are born out of a 'prior' perceptual zone of subjectivity, i.e. we need what Husserl called a 'genealogy of logic' (PP, p. 55, n. 2 (56)). How is the primordial operation of perception supposed to make the possibility of true or false judgements intelligible? Merleau-Ponty argues that operating intentionality impregnates the sensible given with a form or a meaning and it is this form which makes possible the carving out necessary for perceptual judgements. Either this idea is the idea of two at least notionally separable items, the sensible and the configuration of the given (*mis en forme*), or it is not. If they are separable we get a new version of the Myth of the Given only we have relocated the problem from the normative relation between perception and beliefs to the normative relation between the 'sensible chaos' and the primordial configuration of meaning which is to constitute our experiences as world-disclosing (PP, p. 27). If this is the picture we seem to get a peculiar form of transcendental idealism with the Thing in it-self one step further away from the reach of our spontaneity. Merleau-Ponty rejects this option and insists that that we cannot even

ideally separate the sensible signs and the meaning that is the outcome of operating intentionality (PP, p. 48).

If the two aspects of perception are inseparable it seems to open up the possibility of an intrinsic normativity of the primordial perceptual field which Merleau-Ponty argues is essential for the normativity of the space of reasons. Now we are faced with a new dilemma. Either we say that the normativity is constituted independently of spontaneity or we say that such is not the case. If we choose the former option it becomes hard to see how we can regard our explicit judgements as even possibly candidates for justified beliefs about the world given in perception. If we choose the latter the position becomes virtually indistinguishable from embodied conceptualism.

5.4.2 The ambiguity of Phenomenological Naturalism

As I have already shown in *chapter 4* it is evident from many places in Merleau-Ponty's work that he acknowledges that we cannot make sense of our experience as independent of language and so as independent of our spontaneity (PP, pp. 388, 412). When he talks of our complicity or coincidence with the world in perception this should not lead us to think of perception as a pure coincidence between the sensing and the sensed in form of a private, blind and mute immediacy (PP, pp. 71, 388). If this was the nature of perception it would not even be made accessible to the subject undergoing the experience, because she would have to fixate it in thinking and would thereby necessarily disfigure the ineffable given (PP, p. 71). On such conditions Merleau-Ponty's problem of perception would be meaningless. There would be no need for phenomenological solution to the transcendental problem of perception because the problem would never occur. In fact if consciousness was originally such a pure coincidence it seems that there would be no possibility for reflection and no thinking would ever occur. However, it should be already clear that Merleau-Ponty still thinks the perceptual meaning has a primacy. It is the perceptual meaning which motivates our judgements and the perceptual meaning will always exceed the meaning fixated in a judgement. Merleau-Ponty makes his position clear in a text from 1952:

> Nous ne cessons pas de vivre dans le monde de la perception, mais nous le dépassons par la pensée critique, au point d'oublier la contribution qu'il apporte à notre idée du vrai. Car, devant la pensée critique, il n'y a que des *énoncés*, qu'elle discute, accepte ou rejette ; elle a rompu avec l'évidence naïve des *choses* ; et quand elle affirme, c'est parce qu'elle ne trouve plus le moyen de nier. Si nécessaire que soit cette activité de contrôle, qui précise les critères et réclame à notre expérience ses titres de validité, elle ne rend pas compte de notre contact avec le monde perçu, qui est simplement devant nous, en deçà du vrai vérifié et du faux; elle ne définit pas même les démarches positives de la pensée, ni ses acquisitions les plus valables. (Merleau-Ponty 1962 [1952], p. 402).[104]

Here Merleau-Ponty refers to the world disclosed by perception as simply there beyond any verified truths or falsity. It is evident that the distinction between true and false he refers to is a distinction adherent to the level of critical thought, to the idea of a space of reason which we inhabit when we are asking for and giving reasons. The critical question is whether we can make sense of the normativity of the space of reasons on the basis of an idea of a more primitive contact with the world than the one provided by our conceptual capacities. I think Merleau-Ponty's position has difficulties with achieving such an elucidation of the space of reasons because it is caught in an oscillation between the idea of a primordial givenness which is beyond any normativity and the idea of an internal coherence of experience as the origin of the normativity of the space of reasons. The idea of a givenness beyond the truth and falsity tends towards the Myth of the Given because it cannot put any normative constraints on the further development of the given. The idea an internal coherence of experience tends towards reducing the world to a collection of appearances, because it denies the object-dependence of genuine perception and therefore cannot make a principled distinction between veridical and non-veridical appearances. One way to bring out the dialectic predicament of Merleau-Ponty's position is to attend to the ambiguity we find in his explication of the Müller-Lyer illusion.

In the case of the Müller-Lyer illusion the false judgement that one line is longer than the other is said to be motivated by the new meaning that emerges when we attach the inward and outward hashes to two lines of equal length (PP, p. 45). The meaning is said to be inherent in the figure and not to be comprehensible via an appeal

[104] The text was part of Merleau-Ponty's research proposal when he applied for the position as Professor of Philosophy at the College de France in 1952 which he held until his death in 1961.

to the concept of reasons. There is no rational reason as to why it should appear as if one line is longer than the other just because we attach the hashes. The change affected by the hashes cannot be explained via the associative principles of Empiricism either, because no collection of singular sense-data can explain the holistic change in the appearance. There are no separable and constant sensations common between the two appearances. What provides the appearance of a difference in lengths is said to be a 'deep operation' of which the judgment is merely the final ascertainment (*constat final*). The 'deep operation' is the operating intentionality which is taken to be responsible for both our illusory and our veridical perceptions, and which is said to provide the constitution of our perceptual field that makes predication possible (PP, p. 46).

If we look at the way Merleau-Ponty first adduces the Müller-Lyer illusion the problematic status of the primordial perceptual layer becomes clearer (PP, p. 12). Here Merleau-Ponty argues that the original mode of presentation of the two lines is one in which they are experienced as so to speak hovering above the 'territory of being' where a comparison is possible. He argues that the description of the illusion helps to bring out the original *equivocacy* of perceptual meaning which is covered up by the prejudice of the determinacy of being: we must recognize indeterminacy as a positive phenomenon and not just as deficient deviance from the norm of a clear and attentive perception. The appearance which motivates the false judgement now itself seems to be already a going beyond the primary layer of perception with its inherent indeterminacy.[105]

There seems to be a fundamental problem with the position Merleau-Ponty develops here. As Merleau-Ponty stresses, the notion of motivation he appeals to is indiscriminate when it comes to the difference between a veridical and a non-veridical experience (PP, p. 46). In a similar way Merleau-Ponty talks of the hallucinating subject as returning to the primitive indistinction of the true and the false (PP, p. 396). And as we saw in the long quotation above he sometimes speaks of the perceptual world as simply a presence beyond what is taken to be true or false. This original indistinction of

[105] With reference to the Müller-Lyer illusion Brewer has offered arguments against McDowell and in favour of his own non-content view of perception, with which he, like Merleau-Ponty, denies that perception has representational content (Brewer 2008). McDowell responds by showing how the indeterminacy pointed out by Brewer is no different from the indeterminacy of propositions. It is not implied in the claim that one line is longer than the other that there must be answer to the question of whether the claim represents for instance the one as longer than it really is or the other as shorter than it actually is (McDowell 2008b, 201).

truth and falsity is presumably what is recognised when we realize that indeterminacy is an essential feature of the world of perception. But if the original meaning of perception is ambiguous then how is it to ground a belief that is unambiguously true or false? We seem to have lost the possibility of accounting for the inherent normativity of perception reflected in the phenomenal corrigible illusions. I think it was an aspect of this problem which found expression in Merleau-Ponty's denial of any essential difference between the veridical perception of the patch of light and the illusory appearance of a flat stone.

One could argue, in line with Merleau-Ponty, that the very idea of a judgement having a determinate truth-value is part and parcel of the idea of the prejudice of the determinacy of being which necessarily covers up the original perceptual meaning. But such an argument would assume an intellectualistic idea of the truth-predicate as a result of the application of universal rules explicable independently of a reference to their application in concrete situations. It is only if the correct application of the truth-predicate is supposed to be settled from a position which is taken to be independent of our concrete engagement with the life-world that it makes sense to complain that the very idea of true propositions buys into the idea of determinacy of being. There is, however, no reason to think that the idea of a determinate reality that finds expression in Scientistic Naturalism and the accompanying ideal of a view from nowhere is the only reasonable way we can make sense of empirical truths about the world.

We also find another conception of the original layer of experience in Merleau-Ponty's work, which seem to stand opposed to the idea of a realm beyond any normativity. We find this tendency when Merleau-Ponty writes of the 'movement of existence', another term for operating intentionality, as concealing the objectivity of the natural world of perception (PP, p. 340). Here the natural or pre-objective world of perception is not only claimed inaccessible to the methods of natural science it is said to be already covered up by the non-objectifying acts which provide the primary mode of givenness of the cultural world (PP, p. 340). Here Merleau-Ponty exploits an aspect of Husserl's distinction between objectifying and non-objectifying acts different from the one I used in order to explicate McDowell's distinction between having in view and carving out. According to Husserl there are fundamental kinds of intentional objects which are originally given in a non-objectifying mode of intentionality. Among such acts are the axiological acts in which we perceive objects as cultural objects with a certain value or a certain use. Such essentially non-objectifying acts are according to the

early Husserl necessarily founded on objectifying acts in which objects are presented with natural properties such as colour, size, shape and spatial location (Husserl 1992b, V, § 41). Merleau-Ponty argues that the non-objectifying acts cover up the original objectivity provided by the objectifying acts, and so apparently, referring to Husserl's *Logische Untersuchungen*, uses 'objectifying acts' as another term for what he calls 'operating intentionality'.[106] A critical question now arises: How can we reconcile the idea that what is covered up is the original objectivity of the perceptual world with the idea that what is lost of sight within the framework of Objective Thought is the original ambiguity of the perceptual field?

From the standpoint of embodied conceptualism the position of phenomenological naturalism seems caught between a rock and a hard place. On the one side we have the idea of an ambiguous field of perception which makes it hard to conceive of any possible genealogy of critical thought, but which within the framework of Merleau-Ponty has the advantage of staying clear of the prejudice of determinate being. On the other hand we have the idea of a natural world of perception, where the sensibles such as the colours red or green are the sensibles of objects of perception and not sense data or *qualia* of consciousness (PP, p. 12). Such a conception has the advantage of actually giving content to the idea of a world of perception which as Merleau-Ponty puts it can guide our judgements (PP, p. 45). This is the idea of the natural or pre-objective world as an imperious unity which prescribes cognition its objective (PP, xiii). However, because Merleau-Ponty thinks we cannot assume the idea of the natural world of perception as a world of mind-independent objects without succumbing to the prejudice of determinate being, we cannot just leave it at that. If the pre-objective world is not to be merely another word for an internal coherence of a stream of subjective experiences and so be getting alarmingly close to a Berkeleyean idealism, we must understand it as the result of operating intentionality which impregnates meaning on the given (*des données*, PP, p. 27) and we return to the idea of an indeterminate field out of which grows the configuration of the natural world. The sensible is introduced as that which is to 'delimit the zone of subjectivity or solitude' and as an opacity that is to 'make errors possible' (PP, p. 55, n. 2 (56)). We have returned to the problem of making it intelligible how the ambiguity or opacity of the sensible is to provide the normativity which eventually should make intelligible the

[106] Merleau-Ponty stresses that the objectifying acts are essentially non-representational (PP, p. 340).

possibility of mistakes in judgements and of judgements as corrections of possible mistakes.

It appears that Phenomenological Naturalism is caught up in the tension between the Myth of the Given and Coherentism. The Given now takes the form of ambiguous or opaque sensibles out of which operant intentionality is supposed to magically create a normative field of perception that eventually is to be make judgements possible as corrections of perceptual errors. Coherentism takes the form of 'mutually confirming perceptions' (PP, p. xv) in which the world as tribunal of knowledge is reduced to an internal coherence that cannot instantiate an essential difference between genuine world-manifesting perception and mere appearances.[107] If we define beliefs as possible corrections of our original perception, a perception that itself is beyond conceptual errors we seem to lose our entitlement to regard perception as the possible correction of a belief. We are losing our grip on the idea of the world as an imperative that can prescribe the objective of our thinking in perception.

5.4.3 The advantages of Embodied Conceptualism

Merleau-Ponty delivers a fundamental critique of an intellectualistic conception of concepts, which takes concepts to be forms that can be made intelligible independently of perception. He supplements this critique with a critique of Scientistic Naturalism and shows that such a conception of the natural world is prejudiced. However, in his own positive account he seems to rely on the validity of precisely the notions he criticizes. Though he stresses the need to develop a notion of critical thought in which we do not conceive of it as prior to or independent of our sensuous encounter with the world he seems to assume the intellectualistic notion of the mind in order to make his contrast between sensing and thinking. And though he stresses the necessity of not letting a merely causal mode of understanding dictate our understanding of empirical phenomena such as real hallucinations he seems to assume that any naïve realistic understanding of the world of perception must be an element of Objective Thought and must adhere to the prejudice of the determinacy of reality.

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[107] It is the second tendency of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological naturalism which has lead Thomas Baldwin to the conclusion that his bracketing of Objective Thought leaves no thoughts possible at all (Baldwin 1988), and which Naomi Eilan stresses when she claims that Merleau-Ponty has no concept of objectivity (Eilan 1997).

The purpose of *Phénoménologie de la perception* is to demonstrate the relative legitimacy (*droit relative*) of Objective Thought and at the same times put it in its place by revealing the more fundamental *logos* of perception (PP, pp. 69, 419). If Objective Thought is identified as the adherence to the idea that the natural world must be through and through amenable to a merely causal mode of understanding and an adherence to the idea that if concepts are distinct form collections of sense-data they must be intelligible in isolation from perception, then embodied conceptualism stands in opposition to Objective Thought. The proposal of embodied conceptualism is that once we have disengaged ourselves from these commitments a passage has been cleared to the view that the *logos* of perception is the *logos* of language. Embodied conceptualism puts Objective Thought in its place by reminding us that natural science has not earned the rights to define the concept of nature. It recognizes the relative right of Objective thought when it draws a line between the phenomena that are made intelligible to us by being placed within the space of science and the phenomena that are manifest to us solely by being placed within the space of reasons.

Merleau-Ponty finds a deep insight in the idea of a possible accordance of the sensible and the concept itself without concepts, which is what according to Kant is exemplified in the experience of beauty (PP, p. xxi). Merleau-Ponty generalises Kant's idea of a necessary possibility of applying a rule correctly without having to refer to a further rule that justifies the correspondence between the particular instance and the rule or the concept (PP, p. 53). This is according to Merleau-Ponty what makes perception of singular objects possible. These exploitations of Kantian themes seem to go well together with the basic ideas of embodied conceptualism.

McDowell has, with Wittgenstein, argued that it as deep-rooted prejudice about rationality that consistency in concept use must consist in one's being guided by universal principles that can be formulated independently of any reference to particular instances of rule-following (McDowell 1998e, p. 58). If this is true then all applications of concepts, even mathematical concepts, will only be intelligible by virtue of a practice which cannot itself be grounded on a universal rule intelligible in isolation from the practice. With this conception of concepts Merleau-Ponty's idea of a concordance between the sensible and the concept in perception which comes before any judgement can be understood as an idea of perceptual experience as permeated with concepts, without these concepts blocking out the singularity of the object. The idea that a judgement must involve a rupture with original motivational field of perception and that

therefore a judgement will never be able to make explicit all the background reasons that it relies on, can be seen as an expression of the idea the that our confidence in our ability to apply concepts can find no grounding in universal principles that are independent of our life form. This dependence does not render our concepts less apt to express objective thoughts; rather it shows that the idea of objective thoughts, understood as thinking in accordance with rules that somehow exist in an inhuman vacuum but nevertheless are accessible to humans, is infeasible. But if this is the nature of concepts there seems to be no need to speak of a rupture between perception and judgement. The actualisation of concepts in perception is not specific in its need to work without the guidance of universal principles. Merleau-Ponty says that language is both emancipation and a principle of slavery because it interposes itself between our thinking and the things of the world (SC, p. 188, n. 1). Language can be regarded as emancipatory because it, as Merleau-Ponty says, allows us to name our prejudices and through such recognition free ourselves from them. But if it is the initiation into language that initiates us into the world by permeating into the depth of our sensibility there seems to be no reason to think of language as a veil between us and the things themselves.

Merleau-Ponty argues that we experience sensibles such as colours, shape or size as sensibles of objects but that we cannot understand such experiences by reference to the mind-independent objects understood as causes of our experiences. If we try we will disfigure the sensibles by placing them within the mind and thereby obstruct our openness to the world. The alternative picture of Merleau-Ponty is one that is supposed to show the interdependence of subject and world in what he calls a joining of extreme subjectivism and extreme objectivism (PP, p. xv):

> L'intérieur et l'extérieur sont inséparable. Le monde est tout au dedans et je suis tout hors de moi. (PP, 467)

As we have seen the attempt to join the two extremes tends towards an ambiguous characterisation of subjectivity and objectivity. Embodied conceptualism argues that we can conceive of the objects of perception as mind-independent objects that both causes and rationalizes our experiences. This does not make the experience an inner event unless we accept a scientistic monism of events. On the relational view of perception based on a dual conception of natural events we can regard perception as interpenetration of subject and world. Further we can regard for instance the common

sensibles that are manifest in visual experience as a result of a passive actualisation of basic observational concepts such as shape, size, position and movements (McDowell 2008, 5).[108] The fact that such concepts are actualized does not mean we must conceive of perception as a snapshot of the world that reveals everything to the subject with the same high resolution. The intuitional content is content available for thought and, we may add with Merleau-Ponty, available for further perceptual exploration. However, the fact that there is a certain indeterminacy of content for each isolated moment does not mean that we need to assume a primordial layer of indeterminate presence. As Merleau-Ponty stresses the indeterminate objects are given as object for potential fixation. Such fixation is not merely a determination of something that appears as if it was already realised in the object beforehand (*comme réalisée d'avance*, PP, p. 66), it is a manifestation of the very object that is coloured and have the shape and location that we perceive in veridical relational experiences.

Merleau-Ponty predicts that a reflection on perception that is equally capable of elucidating its inherent vitality and its rational intention or meaning can be certain to have located the centre of the phenomenon (PP, p. 65). Embodied conceptualism regards perception as a part of the natural life of humans and as belonging to the natural world just as much as does the blossoming of a cherry tree. It is only if we take the truly natural world to be reducible to the world of exact science that we need to deny this (cf. PP, p. 65). Further it conceives of perception as permeated with rationality in the sense that perception is what provides us with rational grounds for our most basic observational beliefs. Merleau-Ponty speaks of the primary meaning of perception as a text with its peculiar syntax which we try to enunciate in our thinking and he speaks of the discursive articulation as a translation of the meaning found in more primitive modes of consciousness (PP, pp. 45, 338, SC, p. 187). He gives very detailed descriptions of how the configuration of the perceptual field has its own specific structures. Embodied conceptualism does not need to deny that perception has its own syntax but it insists on the idea that there is a fundamental level at which perception and thinking speaks the same language: they are the two kinds of conceptual

[108] McDowell's mentions 'animal' and 'doing' as other concept that might capture a distinctive kind of categorical form which can be realized in intuitional content (McDowell 2008a, p. 5).

articulations, one that is, in Merleau-Ponty's words, mute and another that is, as McDowell puts it, discursive.[109]

5.4.4 The challenge to come

Even if it is right that the intuitional content on the basis of which we form belief about what we see is conceptual through and through it is not in the first instance obvious that there could not be a non-conceptual practical mode of perceiving essential for our practical engagement with the world. It could be claimed that the way intuitions make the world available for my doxastic rationality is different from the way perception function when it forms part of a practical engagement with the world. When I reach out to grasp an object I do not first have to carve out aspects of the object in order to make judgements about how to go about grasping the object. The object is immediately available for my grasping. It seems that the awareness I have of an object in activities such as grasping is of a different kind than the awareness I have of an object when I am scrutinizing it with the purpose of answering some theoretical question about its size, weight or its distance from me. I do not need to make any judgements about the objective size, weight or distance in order to grasp the object. Similarly, my awareness of my own bodily movements in the grasping is not an objectifying awareness. If I try to attend to my movement in the way I attend to a seen robotic arm in order to evaluate its objective velocity, aperture of grip or reaching range such attending will typically have an immediate negative effect on the smoothness and of my grasping. Such observations has been taken as evidence for the existence of a non-conceptual, practical mode of intentionality and it has further been argued that such a practical mode of intentionality is the most basic engagement with the world which the distanced attitude of doxastic rationality possible. I shall argue that we can understand such practical intentionality as permeated with practical concepts and that if we try to do without practical capacities our capacity to perform intentional bodily actions we will tend towards the

[109] Though perception is essentially a receptive capacity I think Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on perception as activity is crucial. One way to proceed in the development of embodied conceptualism could be via Alva Noë's notion of practical sensori-motor knowledge as constitutive for concept possession (Noë 2004). Further I think we may find useful resources in the vast richness of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. McDowell has conceded that practical abilities that cannot be identified with propositional knowledge may be essential for the possession and actualisation of basic observational concepts in perception. However, this does not imply that such possibly sensori-motor practical capacities can be made intelligible independently of adverting to the conceptual content they enable, nor that they enter the content of the experience *qua* non-conceptual content (cf. McDowell 2006d).

unintelligible. I think it is a real insight that we need to understand our perceptual attending to our environment as able to take on a practical mode in which we do not carve out features as we do when we prepare the content of perception for theoretical judgements. Such practical perception, I argue, does not go beyond our conceptual capacities; it is permeated with practical concepts. Furthermore the conceptual content of such practical perception can serve as input to our doxastic rationality. I can see a stone as too heavy to lift, and on the basis of such a judgment I can assess the objective weight of the stone.

I shall now turn to Merleau-Ponty's version of the transcendental problem of agency in order to take up challenges to embodied conceptualism raised via Merleau-Ponty's notion of motor intentionality.

CHAPTER 6
MOTOR INTENTIONALITY AND THE PROBLEM OF AGENCY

6.1 Merleau-Ponty's problem of bodily agency

6.1.1 Merleau-Ponty on the problem of bodily agency

Merleau-Ponty presents the problem of bodily agency as analogous to what he calls the problem of perception. In both cases the problem is to recognize the *sui generis* character of the phenomena in relation to both the rational relations between reasons and the merely causal relations made intelligible by traditional natural science. The problem of perception is the problem of recognizing our perception as an original kind of cognition that ties us inherently to the objects of the world (cf. PP, p. 403). The problem of agency is to recognize our bodily actions as the way we can intervene in and modify the present reality. As long as consciousness is regarded as self-transparent and self-sufficient and our natural sensibility and motility is left for science to explain, such recognition is impeded:

> Corrélativement la perception et l'action prises dans ce qu'elles ont de spécifique, c'est-à-dire comme la connaissance et la modification d'un réalité, devraient se trouver rejetées de la conscience. (SC, p. 177)

The problem is to recognize ourselves as conscious beings that are essentially perceivers and agents in the world.

The notion of motor intentionality is developed by Merleau-Ponty in an attempt to capture what he characterizes as an original, practical way of relating to objects on equal footing with the original intentionality of perception (cf. PP, pp. 128, 160):

> L'expérience motrice de notre corps n'est pas un cas particulier de connaissance ; elle nous fournit une manière d'accéder au monde et à l'objet, une 'praktognosie' (1) qui doit être reconnue comme originale et peut-être comme originaire. (PP, p. 164) [110]

[110] The distinction between 'original' (*originale*) and 'primary' (*originaire*) can be understood as a distinction between being irreducible to a composition of other more fundamental kinds of intentional experiences and being at the origin of all other intentional experiences. When characterizing perception he sometimes uses the two concepts interchangingly (cf. SC, p. 241).

In the quote above it is the experience of moving that is said to constitute an original mode of intentionality. In other places it is said that it is in the actual moving of one's body towards an object that we find motor intentionality: '…et mouvoir son corps c'est viser à travers lui les choses, c'est le laisser répondre à leur sollicitation qui s'excerce sur lui sans aucune représentation' (PP, p. 161). In a movement that displays motor intentionality the movement and our awareness of the movement are, according to Merleau-Ponty, indissoluble (PP, p. 128). Motor intentionality is claimed to be characteristic of certain bodily movements and not just of certain mental occurrences that are intelligible in isolation from the actual movements. The notion of motor intentionality is to provide us with an understanding of bodily movements as phenomena that are intrinsically agency-involving. In so far as we take the notion of indissolubility to be symmetrical, the consequence of such agency-involving movements is a notion of the experience of moving as essentially body-involving.[111]

Merleau-Ponty identifies the prejudice that blocks the view of motor intentionality as the Cartesian heritage that allows for only two modes of being: Being in-itself and being for-itself (cf. PP, p. 231). Being in-itself is everything that is understood as existing independently of consciousness and this region of reality is assumed to be intelligible exclusively from what Merleau-Ponty refers to as the third-person perspective of natural science. Being for-itself is conscious being that is as such exclusively accessible from a first-person perspective, which allegedly reveals the whole truth and nothing but the truth about the being of subjectivity. Merleau-Ponty, like McDowell, finds a basic motivation for this dualism in the attraction of the idea that empirical reality must consist in whatever can be made intelligible by natural science.

When Merleau-Ponty makes a contrast between the first-person perspective and the third-person perspective this is equivalent to a distinction between a phenomenological perspective and the perspective of natural science. The third-person perspective is the perspective from which we make items intelligible by placing them in the realm of science. The phenomenological perspective is the perspective from which we can make our experiential life accessible for methodical theoretical understanding. We can say that the phenomenological perspective is a perspective on the way the world, other human beings and we ourselves are experienced in our everyday life; a

[111] A further clarification of how we can interpret Merleau-Ponty's notion of motor intentionality as essentially body-involving would need to analyse his account of phantom limbs.

perspective from which the phenomenologist attempts to characterize essential features of the phenomena in question in its first-person mode of givenness. The perspective of science, on the contrary, is an attempt to develop a view from nowhere in which the subjective features of our specific way of experiencing are supposed to be left behind as merely subjective.

Merleau-Ponty argues that the reason why such motor intentionality has not been recognized by philosophers and psychologists is that they assume an objectivistic conception of the body. The body is conceived as an object in itself consisting of parts that stand in merely external, causal relations to one another; it is identified with the body as understood by natural science (cf. PP, p. 86). Such a conception of the body goes hand in hand with the Cartesian idea of consciousness as self-transparent and intelligible independently of the body. The result is that consciousness must be conceived of as hidden somewhere in the flesh and blood of the body and thereby it is the least intelligible of all occult qualities (cf. PP, p. 401). The general problem is that if conscious experiences are claimed to be *sui generis* in relation to the processes of the objective body, then the subject of experiences cannot *qua* subject be placed within the world to which it supposedly has perceptual access and within which it acts. The subject is, with an expression from McDowell, expelled to a cosmic exile (McDowell 1998d, p. 238).

The consequence of the dualism of the first- and the third-person perspective for an analysis of intentional bodily action is that the bodily movements can only be externally related to our intentions or our willing. Merleau-Ponty writes:

> On ne donnait à la volonté qu'un fiat instantané, l'execution de l'acte était livrée tout entière à la mécanique nerveuse. (PP, p. 68).

We have the by now familiar picture of action as a certain combination of two independent items; a mental willing and a bodily movement. Merleau-Ponty argues that this evokes an occult picture of how the mind relates to the body, which leaves it unexplained by what magical operation intentions manage to excite just the right bodily movements (cf. PP, p. 161, n. 1 (p. 163)). If the subject is to re-enter nature by relating to the forces of nature discovered by natural science the relation is, as Merleau-Ponty puts it, *barely conceivable* (SC, p. 177).

The Cartesian conception of the mind that obscures our self-understanding as bodily agents is, according to Merleau-Ponty, equivalent to the idea that intentional

experiences are mediated by representational content. Representational content can be made the content of a judgement and is as such accessible to the subject. Cartesianism presumes that only what is given to consciousness in the form of a representation, i.e., as content, can be accessible to it (cf. SC, p. 187, PP, p. 62). According to such a Representationalism, the subjective side of a bodily action consists in a representation of, at a minimum, the goal of the action and possibly also a representation of the bodily automatisms that are to be triggered by the representations and assure the execution of the action (SC, p. 188). Merleau-Ponty's general argument against this intellectualistic model is that it makes bodily agency unintelligible. The model must assume some magical operation by which the representations can set in motion precisely the third-person objective processes that eventually will lead to the desired outcome. This critique is voiced in the context of a discussion of a specific model of action developed by the neuro-physiologist Liepmann (PP, p. 161, n.1). Merleau-Ponty's critique is however raised as a perfectly general critique of any model that assumes a dualism of representational capacities on the one side and bodily capacities on the other. In order to spell out this critique and compare it with the critique I set out in *Part One*, it is however helpful to take a brief look at the way Merleau-Ponty makes use of Liepmann's work in his argument.

6.1.2 Motor intentionality and motor apraxia

Liepmann used the notion of motor intentionality (*Bewegungsentwurf*) in order to account for certain cases of motor disturbances, which he dubbed *motor apraxia* (cf. Rothi and Heilman 1996, p. 112). In Liepmann's classical case of the *Regierungsrat*, the patient is unable to perform the most simple tasks with his right hand, but if he is forced to respond to a command with his left hand he responds swiftly and accurately (Rothi and Heilman 1996, p. 112). The case is neither a case of simple paralysis, as the motility of the hand is not completely missing, nor is it a case of a disturbance of what Liepmann called the 'ideational preparation of the action'. A disturbance of the ideational preparation is a disturbance of the representation of the action to be performed. One way such an ideational disturbance can manifest itself is in a confusion of different parts of a more complex action. In the *Regierungsrat* case, Liepmann found no such disturbance. The fact that the patient is perfectly able to perform actions with his left hand is taken to show that the intellectual capacity to represent the action is intact. The representational understanding is furthermore demonstrated by the fact that

the patient can respond immediately and correctly to whole-body demands such as ‘walk to the window’ (Rothi and Heilman 1996, p. 112).

Merleau-Ponty argues that when Liepmann demonstrates that what is disturbed in cases of motor apraxia is a ‘knowing how’ (*pouvoir* / *ein Können*) and not a ‘knowing that’ (*savoir* / *ein Kennen*) he is on the verge of breaking the spell of Objective Thought and dismantling the dualism of mind and body:

> On ne rendra compréhensible l’apraxie, on ne fera droit aux observations de Liepmann que si le mouvement à faire peut être anticipé, sans l’être par une représentation, et cela même n’est possible que si la conscience est définie non comme position explicite de ses objets, mais plus géneralement comme référence á un objet pratique aussi bien que théorique, comme être au monde, si le corps de son côté est défini non comme un objet parmi tous les objets, mais comme le véhicule de l’être au monde. (PP, p. 161, n.1 (p. 163)).

The non-representational anticipation of the movement and the practical reference to an object are two aspects of the same phenomenon, which Merleau-Ponty with Liepmann calls motor intentionality. Without the assumption of such a non-representational motor intentionality, *motor apraxia* becomes, according to Merleau-Ponty, unintelligible. The pathology can neither be explained by a purely intellectual disturbance nor be a purely physiological incapacity to move. Therefore, Merleau-Ponty argues, we need to see it as a disturbance of a specific kind of motor intentionality.

Liepmann’s notion of representations is obviously far from the Cartesian notion of self-transparent judgements and might to some extent be understood as what we would today refer to as sub-personal representations. Merleau-Ponty, however, finds a reminiscence of Cartesian dualism in Liepmann’s analysis, when Liepmann makes the ‘knowing how’ a property of the ‘neurological substance’, because it cannot be placed on the side of representations.

Merleau-Ponty’s attempt at showing the unintelligibility of motor apraxia within the framework of Representationalism can be seen as pointing to a deeper unintelligibility underpinned by such an intellectualistic conception of action. If we take our intentions with their representational content to be intelligible in separation from the bodily know-how and leave the latter to be explained solely by natural science, then Minimal Pragmatism is undermined. The need for an occult operation referred to by Merleau-Ponty can be seen as the need to re-establish Minimal Pragmatism by

introducing some kind of telekinetic ability that magically lets representations bring about what they represent.

Merleau-Ponty criticises the intellectualistic model for drawing a distorted picture of the phenomenology of performing bodily actions: ‘Le sujet ne vit pas dans un monde d’états de conscience ou de représentations d’où il croirait pouvoir par une sorte de miracle agir sur de choses extérieures ou les connaître’ (SC, p. 204). In the intellectualistic model it is claimed that the representational capacities that can be actualized in intentions and empirical judgements are intelligible in separation from the actual bodily movements as well as from the deliverances of the senses. This leaves the agent with nothing to believe in except for a miracle that will secure that her intentions are actually carried out. Obviously not all first-person convictions that a certain action is possible for the agent are beliefs about what, in the intellectualistic picture, is the real cause of one’s arm reaching out for an object. We need not have any beliefs about the neuro-physiological mechanisms that enable us to reach out in order to do so with confidence. And even if the agent did have true beliefs about the neuro-physiology of reaching, such knowledge would be of no practical use to her in her grasping. Furthermore, in order to believe that she is capable of performing the action she would still need to believe that some power completely unknown to her ensures her success. She would need to believe in some occult power that secures that the mental occurrence that she is capable of bringing about and knows under the description of intending or trying to reach is also identifiable as exactly the neural event that is needed for her to begin to reach out. All she could do under such circumstances is try and hope for the best and even this might, as we saw in *Chapter 3*, be too much to hope for for the intellectualist, as it is the very idea of trying that is under threat.

I think it is the fatal consequence of a total failure to make bodily agency intelligible that Merleau-Ponty gestures at when in a later work he writes:

> Nous ne ferions rien si nous n’avions, avec notre corps, le moyen de sauter par-dessus tous les moyens nerveux et musculaires du movement pour nous porter au but anticipé. (Merleau-Ponty 1969b, p. 127).

Here it is said that it is because of our body that we can bypass all the details of the objective body that science describes and directly reach out for an object, without the need to represent any means by which we are to reach out. It is our body understood as

already imbued with motor intentionality that allows us to act directly on perceived objects. It is claimed that without such motor intentionality we would never get anything done. One reading of this statement would be to say that in case we were forced to attend to and control all the details of the neuro-physiological processes such attending would stand in the way of any swift object-directed action (cf. Käll 2006, p. 96). Applying the idea of a necessary Minimal Pragmatism we might also read the statement as an expression of the idea that we cannot understand our capacity to grasp an object by an appeal to objective knowledge of the functioning of our body plus an additional appeal to representational capacities actualized in intentions that are claimed to be intelligible independently of any possible bodily effects. Such scientific knowledge will neither do the agent who is about to act any good, nor will it do when we are trying to make intelligible how intentional bodily actions are possible from a theoretical point of view.

The question is now whether the idea of the body as imbued with motor intentionality can be conceived as the body understood as a collection of practical conceptual capacities, or whether the notion of motor intentionality shows the need to assume a non-representational and non-conceptual kind of practical intentionality. I shall argue that we can distinguish between a critique of Intellectualism as characterized by Merleau-Ponty and a critique of a conceptual conception of practical, bodily capacities. I argue that whereas Merleau-Ponty does provide good reasons as to why Intellectualism fails, these reasons do not apply to a conceptualism that is combined with a dual conception of bodily movements and a disjunctive account of trying. I shall carry out my defence by first analysing Merleau-Ponty's way of arguing for the non-representational and non-conceptual nature of motor intentionality via certain pathological cases. I argue that Merleau-Ponty's use of the so-called Schneider case in particular cannot pull the weight he intends. When we analyse Merleau-Ponty's arguments they are revealed as ambiguous, and I argue that a possible way of accounting for this ambiguity is by the fact that the possibility of an embodied conceptualism is not recognized in the arguments. Next I turn to three different authors' ways of appropriating Merleau-Ponty's work. I argue that all three fail to deliver crucial arguments against the embodied conceptualism I developed in *Part One.* First, however, I shall introduce the notion of the lived body as a capacity for action.

6.1.3 Merleau-Ponty's notion of the lived body

When Merleau-Ponty, in the chapter on motility in *Phénoménologie de la perception* ('III, La spatialité du corps propre et la motricité'), first directs his attention towards the body in movement, it is with a view to furthering our understanding of the relationship between our body and space and in particular the spatiality which is unique for what he terms 'le corps propre' or 'le corps vivant' and which I shall refer to as the lived body.[112] The concept of the lived body is developed to describe the primordial sense of our embodiment which is covered up as long as Scientistic Naturalism is allowed to define what we can understand under the term 'body'. The lived body is the body as the vehicle of our practical life in the world of perception; the body through which we live our worldly lives. It is the body understood primarily as a capacity (*puissance*) for action and for perception and as such it is claimed to be, by necessity, imperceptible from the exclusively third-person perspective of a science confined within the framework of Objective Thought (cf. PP, p. 90). The aspect of the lived body which Merleau-Ponty seeks to highlight in this chapter is its essential practical character, i.e., the body understood as power over a certain range of actions (cf. PP, pp. 122, 126). Before I turn to some of Merleau-Ponty's specific arguments for his account of motor intentionality, I will highlight some of the descriptive characteristics of the body as a capacity for action and juxtapose these with the conception of our motility as permeated with practical conceptual capacities I suggested in *Chapter 3*.

The lived body is not moved like any other object and this indicates that it comes with its own characteristic spatiality; it is not experienced as placed in space in the same way as we experience objects around us as taking up positions in space:

> Je meus les objets extérieurs à l'aide de mon propre corps qui les prend en un lieu pour les conduire en un autre. Mais je le meus, lui directement, je ne le trouve pas en un point d'espace objectif pour le mener en un autre, je n'ai pas besoin de le chercher, il est déja avec moi, – je n'ai pas besoin de le conduire vers le terme du movement, il y touche dès le début et c'est lui qui s'y jette. Les rapports de ma decision et mon corps dans le movement sont de rapport magique. (PP, p. 110).

[112] Merleau-Ponty develops the concepts from Husserl's notion of '*Eigen-Leib*'.

This description might seem to be in tension with Anscombe's remark that there is really nothing easier than to move a matchbox just like I can move my arm, which I discussed at the end of *Chapter 1*. On my understanding of Anscombe's remark, it is, however, an expression of exactly the fact that we move our body directly in contrast to the way we move the matchbox. When Merleau-Ponty stresses that we can move our body directly, this is a way of saying that we can move our body without our teleologically basic action being a body-directed trying in which, for instance, I intend to move my hand with a certain force and velocity in a specified direction. The direct way of moving my hand is exactly the way in which I would not normally move the match-box.[113] To move the matchbox I would intentionally grasp it and then move it to a different location. There is of course no such grasping of my hand in order to move it. Nevertheless I can move my hand in a way that is at a certain level similar to the way I move the matchbox. If asked to demonstrate that I can move my hand from left to right, I can do so and my moving my hand will, just like my moving of the matchbox, be a teleologically basic action. In other words, the fact that we, in Merleau-Ponty's words, directly move our body is what makes object-directed actions possible *qua* teleologically basic actions. Furthermore, it is the fact that this is possible which makes intelligible Anscombe's likening of the way I move the matchbox and the way I move my hand when I attend to it.

When Merleau-Ponty writes that the relation between my decision and my body in movement is magical this is not an appeal to some occult power, it is an attempt to capture a phenomenological feature of what, in the terminology of *Chapter 3*, we could call our object-directed embodied tryings. We might say it is a way of registering that there is nothing I need to do in order to begin my movement towards an object which I intend to grasp. My grasping can be both procedurally and teleologically basic when the object is within reach.

McDowell emphasized that once we manage to conceive of perception as directly attending to the objects of the world, there is no point in representing the objects we act on as 'lying on the far side of an "output" interface' (McDowell 1998g, p. 358). In a similar vein, Merleau-Ponty writes:

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[113] I say 'normally' to leave open the possibility of incorporating objects, even a matchbox, within one's body schema the way a blind person might incorporate a cane (cf. PP, p. 167).

> Puisque l'âme reste coextensive à la nature, que le sujet percevant ne saisit pas comme un microscosme où parviendraient médiatement les messages des événements extérieurs, et que son regard s'étand sur les choses meme – agir sur elles n'est pas pour lui sortir de soi et provoquer dans un fragment d'étendue un déplacement local, […]. On peut dire, si l'on veut que le rapport de la chose perçue à la perception, ou de l'intention aux gestes qui la réalisent est dans la conscience naïve un rapport magique: mais encore faudrait-il comprendre la conscience magique comme elle se comprend elle-même. (SC, p. 204).

The problem with the conception of the body as pure object and the accompanying conception of pure consciousness was, as we saw above, that it cannot make intelligible the experience we have of our basic object-directed tryings. According to such a dualist picture, we ought to experience the magical connection as a kind of miracle, because it is not something that seems even thinkable in that picture. When we do not experience it thus, the consequence seems to be a need to evoke a kind of error theory concerning our experience of bodily agency, which can explain away our experience of being directed towards an object in a direct movement. The critical question is now whether we can make the idea that 'the soul is coextensive with nature' intelligible via the idea that we can regard our natural motility as permeated with practical concepts.

Merleau-Ponty describes the way we are aware of our body as a potential for action via an expression from Husserl: we have an embodied 'I can' awareness (PP, pp. 160). I do not know the power, weight and reach of my body as an engineer knows a machine; I know my body in its pragmatic meaning. I know my hands as my grasping power and my legs as my ambulatory power and it is in virtue of these powers that I can immediately see an object as within reach and a place as a place to go (cf. PP, p. 171). What gives unity to my hand as hand is the 'I can' awareness which always accompanies my hand when it is functioning normally (PP, p. 336). Merleau-Ponty calls this primordial unity of the body a *pre-objective* unity and argues that neither Empiricism nor Intellectualism can account for this original, pragmatic unity of the body. What I propose is that the pre-objective unity can be conceived as the unity of the agent as a rational, embodied agent with a bodily know how which we can characterize as a repertoire of teleologically basic capacities.

In the chapter on motility, Merleau-Ponty argues that we need a notion of non-representational motor intentionality in order to account for our bodily agency. Much of Merleau-Ponty's argument concerning motor intentionality is carried out with

reference to certain psychopathological cases, as we saw with Liepmann's case of motor apraxia. The case of which Merleau-Ponty makes the most extensive use is Gelb and Goldstein's famous case of Schneider. In what follows I shall reconstruct the arguments proposed by Merleau-Ponty via the Schneider case. My aim is to demonstrate that Merleau-Ponty's arguments are haunted by an ambiguity and that once we disambiguate the arguments we will also be able to see that the conceptualism of McDowell and the conceptualism of agency that I propose are not vulnerable to the objections against Intellectualism.

6.2 Motor intentionality and the Schneider case

6.2.1 The case of Schneider

During the First World War on the 4 June 1915 the 24 years old mineworker Johann Schneider who was serving as a soldier in the German Army was wounded by mine-splinters in the back of his head and went unconscious for four days (Goldstein and Gelb 1918, p. 9). The exact dimension of his wounds is uncertain but there is general evidence that he suffered from substantial brain injuries (cf. Marotta and Behrmann 2004, p. 634). He was admitted at the Hospital for Brain Injury in Frankfurt in February 1916 where he became the patient of the psychologist Adhémer Gelb and the neurologist Kurt Goldstein (Goldstein and Gelb 1918, p. 9). In their first paper on the case Gelb and Goldstein diagnosed Schneider as a case of visual agnosia and they took the case to be of fundamental importance as a particularly pure example of the apperceptive kind of agnosia (Goldstein and Gelb 1918, p. 137). The term apperceptive mind-blindness or visual agnosia had been introduced by Lissauer in 1890 who distinguished it from associative visual agnosia; a distinction which is still in use in neuro-psychology (cf. Farah 2004, p. 4). Apperceptive visual agnosia is generally used about patients who have a failure of normal visual object recognition, in spite of relatively preserved elementary visual functions, such as acuity, brightness discrimination and colour vision as well as reasonably well-functioning general cognitive abilities (Farah 2004, pp. 11-12). Associative visual agnosia is used about patients who have a selective impairment in their recognition of visually presented objects, despite an apparently intact visual perception, which is shown in their ability to copy drawings in which they don't recognize the motive (Farah 2004, *chapter 6*). Gelb and Goldstein argues that apperceptive visual agnosia is a matter of an inability to integrate the visual impressions into a Gestalt, and that when Schneider is able to

recognize visually presented objects such as letters this is only in virtue of kinaesthetic feedback from compensating tracing movements of hand and head.

The debate about the nature of visual agnosia is ongoing and there is no general consensus as to how we should understand the Schneider case on the basis of modern neuro-psychology. Farah classifies the case of Schneider as a case of apperceptive agnosia in the narrow sense she with Benson and Greenberg terms "visual form agnosia" (Farah 2004, p. 13). Marotta and Behrmann suggest interpreting the case as a case of what Riddoch and Humphrey calls "integrative agnosia" (Marotta and Behrmann 2004, p. 636), a notion Farah critically discusses under the heading of "associative visual agnosia" (Farah 2004, pp. 78-82).

Because of the medical uncertainties surrounding the Schneider case it can seem to be hazardous to try to base any philosophical arguments on the case. Recently the neurologist Jonathan Cole expressed his doubts about the case. Cole writes that he for one has never become clear on what kind of psychiatric problem Schneider suffered from (Cole 2008, p. 27). He dubs the tendentious use of psychopathological cases he finds amongst philosophers the "Schneider" problem".[114] The neurophysiologist Georg Goldenberg has argued that not only is the philosophical use of the Schneider case tendentious, the empirical studies of the case made by Gelb and Goldstein and their collaborators are useless as science (Goldenberg 2003). Goldenberg argues that the case is the fabricated result of an unhappy alliance between scientists blinded by their enthusiasm for a certain holistic solution to the mind-brain-problem and a patient eager to please. He further claims that Schneider was motivated by the money he received for being a subject of investigation as well as perhaps his fear of returning to the war (Goldenberg 2003, p. 295, p. 282).[115] I shall only briefly comment on the debate concerning the genuineness of the case, as my real concern is the way the case figures in Merleau-Ponty's argument. If, however, Goldenberg's accusations were to be altogether true it would make it futile to even begin analysing the arguments of Merleau-Ponty with any philosophical purpose in mind; they would be of merely philological interest.

Goldenberg does not claim that Gelb and Goldstein deliberately faked their case report and he acknowledges that the case reports indicate that Schneider did in

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[114] Cole's remark appears in a critical discussion of Gallagher and Zahavi's book *The phenomenological Mind* (2008). The authors reply that they do not refer to the Schneider case in their book partly because of their uncertainty about the extent of Schneider's brain damage (Zahavi and Gallagher 2008, p. 99)

[115] Goldenberg does not document to what extend Schneider was paid.

fact suffer from substantial brain damage (Goldenberg 2003, pp. 291, 297). What he argues is that a range of the most distinct symptoms described by Gelb and Goldstein were really invented "fantastic embellishments" (Goldenberg 2003, p. 282). He bases his dismissal of the case study on both later investigations of Schneider and on what he takes to be internal incoherencies in Gelb and Goldstein's account. Let me just mention two reasons as to why I don't think the evidence presented by Goldenberg's convincingly establishes his harsh conclusion. For one thing, as Farah notes, one reason that the neurologists Richard Jung and Eberhard Bay in 1942 and 1945 were unable to confirm Gelb and Goldstein's findings could simply be the recovering of the patient, the possibility of which is testified by at least one other similar case-study (Farah 2004, p. 21).[116] Furthermore it was in particular the compensatory tracing movements that Jung and Bay did not find convincing evidence for, but taking into consideration that later, visually impaired patients have spontaneously adopted similar tracing strategies it seems unlikely that Schneider should have originally invented the behaviour to satisfy the scientists (cf. Farah 2004, p. 12, Marotta and Behrmann 2004, p. 635). [117]

Disregarding the medical uncertainties I shall now present the parts of Gelb and Goldstein's research that are most relevant for the arguments of Merleau-Ponty.

In the 1918-paper Gelb and Goldstein stated that there were no signs of either apraxia or of linguistic disturbances (Goldstein and Gelb 1918, p. 12). In the following examination such signs were detected and Goldstein's 1923 paper describe a number of disturbances, which he takes to be the result of Schneider's visual agnosia. I shall focus on the motor disturbances appealed to by Merleau-Ponty. When Schneider was asked to point or to grasp his own nose in an experimental setting where he was blindfolded he was unable to perform these tasks in the ordinary, immediate fashion (Goldstein 1923, p. 158), whereas in ordinary life he would seem to have no difficulties in for instance finding his handkerchief in his pocket and putting it to his nose. Even

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[116] As a matter of fact Schneider recovered to an extent that he could run his own grocery shop from 1932 until 1944 when his house was bombed. After the Second World War he was even elected mayor of the village he lived in (cf. Goldenberg 2003, p. 294).

[117] Concerning the internal coherence Goldenberg seems too quick when he argues that Gelb and Goldstein present contradicting evidence concerning Schneider's tracing movements (Goldenberg 2003, p. 285). What Goldenberg points out as revealing their incompetence is exactly noticed by Gelb and Goldstein's and they provide a coherent explanation of the facts, which Goldenberg does not take into consideration (cf. Goldstein and Gelb 1918, pp. 81-83).

when asked to perform such habitual acts with closed eyes he would in general be able to do so (Goldstein 1923, p. 173). In a later paper Goldstein interprets the combination of a preserved ability to lead the hand to a specific body part in habitual actions and a disturbed ability to point out locations of the body on request as an expression of a dissociation of what he calls a grasping attitude and a pointing attitude (Goldstein 1973). This is not to be understood as a distinction between two kinds of movements which can be differentiated by the physical position of the hand in relation to the body. Two movements which *qua* isolated physical movements seem identical can be carried out with a grasping attitude and a pointing attitude respectively (Goldstein 1973, p. 264). Goldstein argues that we need to assume these two different ways of performing actions in order to account for the seemingly arbitrary behaviour of certain patients with brain-damage including Schneider. Some of these patients, who can repeatedly grasp their own nose, do not consistently fail to point to their nose. The fact that they sometimes seem to be able to point is made sense of by assuming that they perform what looks like a pointing in the grasping attitude. Evidence for this assumption is that when the patients are asked to perform actions which are presumably very difficult to perform as grasping movements, such as pointing to a location 2 cm in front of their nose, they fail consistently (Goldstein 1973, p. 264).

In his 1923 paper Goldstein introduces the distinction between abstract and concrete movements as a distinction between isolated, arbitrary movements performed on request and habitual movements performed in everyday life (Goldstein 1923, p. 156).[118] Making a circle with the hand in front of oneself in the experimental setting is an example of an abstract movement. The movement is said to be arbitrary, in the sense that it does not serve any further purpose than simply performing the movement itself and it is isolated in the sense that it is performed in isolation from any other act. In the terms introduced by the end of *Chapter 1* we might say that being arbitrary and isolated is equivalent to being a body-directed, teleologically basic action which is not performed as a means for any further end. The same circular movement made in the abstract might be performed when one is clearing the mirror from steam in which case it would be carried out as a concrete movement. Schneider was able to

[118] Goldstein is here wrestling with the methodological problem of experimentally investigating the concrete behaviour of daily life. He states that he will observe the concrete behaviour in experimental settings in order to investigate them more closely (Goldstein 1923, p. 173).

perform such habitual movement in a way almost indistinguishable from normal persons, as when he takes out his handkerchief in order to blow his nose. But when he was asked to raise his hands and make a circular movement he could not do this in the normal immediate manner. Goldstein describes what happens as follows. Schneider sets his whole body in motion and then progressively narrows down the movements to the relevant limbs (Goldstein 1923, p. 157). He then raises his arms and moves them in apparently planless straight or curved lines, until he recognizes, according to Goldstein on kinaesthetic grounds, one of these movements as of the correct shape, after which he promptly performs the circle (Goldstein 1923, pp. 158-59).

In later writings Gelb and Goldstein generalize the distinction between two kinds of movement and talk of two different attitudes, one called abstract the other concrete. The distinction between a pointing and grasping attitude is an instance of this general distinction between an abstract and a concrete attitude. Not only goal-orientated movements but also for instance ways of perceiving and of understanding language are categorized as concrete or abstract. The concrete and the abstract attitudes are to be understood as "*capacity levels of the total personality*" and not as isolated to specific capacities (Goldstein and Scheerer 1964 [1941], p. 1). Goldstein and Scheerer further emphasize the interdependence between the two attitudes in the normal case:

> Although the normal person's behaviour is prevailingly concrete, this concreteness can be considered normal only as long as it is embedded in and co-determined by the abstract attitude. For instance, in the normal person both attitudes are always present in a definite figure-ground relation. (Goldstein & Scheerer, 1941/1964, p. 8)

They characterize the neuro-pathological as in general to be understood as different forms of disintegration of the two attitudes, which under normal circumstances are integrated:

> In pathology this relation [the figure-ground relation] becomes disorganized, if not disintegrated, into an abnormal condition. (ibid., p. 9)

The methodological implications and the explanatory role played by the concepts of concrete and abstract attitude are not straightforward. Besides from its usefulness in highlighting the phenomenon of motor intentionality Merleau-Ponty's discussion of the

Schneider case constitutes his attempt to work out the kind of understanding of the subject of psychology and the nature of psychological understanding or explanation implied in Gelb and Goldstein's concept formations.

6.2.2 The internal tension of Merleau-Ponty's text

In a footnote Richard M. Zaner has pointed out an apparent inconsistency in Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of certain pathological cases, in particular his interpretation of the Schneider case: Schneider is said both to have a preserved and an impaired non-representational familiarity with his own body and his surroundings (Zaner 1964, p. 186). I shall argue that the apparent consistency is a symptom of a methodological ambiguity. Though Merleau-Ponty might not be presenting a formally contradictory interpretation of the Schneider case, his text can easily leave the reader confused about the methodological status of the case. The apparent contradiction is a product of the fact that Merleau-Ponty uses the case of Schneider in two manners that seem mutually exclusive: Motor intentionality is to be revealed both by its perspicuous preservation and by its contrastive impairment in one and the same case. This double use of the Schneider case has received very little critical discussion in the literature. [119] It does however manifest itself in the fact that we find interpretations of Merleau-Ponty's text and the Schneider case which more or less advertently opt for one of the two diverging lines of argumentations present in the text.

Sean Kelly interprets the Schneider case as a case in which we find "a kind of pure motor intentionality" and in line with Merleau-Ponty's first line of argument he argues that the unreflective, skilful coping activities of normal subjects involve the same kind of experience as that which is intact in the pathological case (Kelly 2004, p. 75). In contrast Hubert Dreyfus, in his most recent writing on motor intentionality, follows Merleau-Ponty's second line of argument when he puts the emphasis on the differences between the pathological version and the normal version of

[119] Charles Siewert comes close to making the problematic double use of the Schneider case explicit. He registers that though the Schneider case is supposed to bring motor intentionality to light, i.e. make it evident by its perspicuous preservation, it is exactly taken to be present also in the normal execution of spontaneous actions that prove difficult for Schneider (Siewert 2005, p. 273). Just after this Siewert refers to places where Merleau-Ponty explicitly exposes his procedure as one of making what is the case in the normal subject evident by its contrastive disruption in the pathological case. Glen Braddock also notices how the "practical, embodied knowledge" is said both to be missing, namely when so called abstract movements are to be performed but returns when he is to perform the "concrete" actions, but he does not raise this as a problem for a coherent understanding of the case and of Merleau-Ponty's text (Braddock 2001, p. 13).

motor intentionality (Dreyfus 2007a, p. 64).[120] A prima facie reason for a preference for the second line of argument is provided by the fact that it is during this line that Merleau-Ponty first introduces the notion of motor intentionality (PP, p. 128), but as we shall see Kelly's interpretation is not unmotivated and Merleau-Ponty's text is in need of clarification.

I will argue that the most promising way to disambiguate Merleau-Ponty's analysis is to put the emphasis on the second of Merleau-Ponty's two lines of argument and moderate the conclusion of the first line of argument accordingly. This reading will not only avoid the potential contradiction. The reading will provide the most coherent reading of the two lines of argument in the context of Merleau-Ponty's general methodological reflections on psychopathological cases. Furthermore it will correspond with Merleau-Ponty's references to other pathological cases as well as with the specific interpretation of the Schneider case we find in the text after the two lines of arguments are presented. The analysis of Merleau-Ponty's text will help bring out the reasons as to why I think embodied conceptualism is not vulnerable to the critique Merleau-Ponty launches against Intellectualism. Once we see that the first line of argumentation cannot be taken to establish a kind of Common Kind Assumption concerning the motor intentionality of the pathological cases and the motor intentionality of the normal case it becomes easier to see how we can block the arguments to the effect that motor intentionality is non-conceptual. The analysis will be particularly useful for the demonstration of how Kelly's arguments, which are an attempt to re-enact Merleau-Ponty's first line of argument, can be questioned.

[120] Dreyfus notes we must assume such two versions of motor intentionality as motor intentionality is said to be what Schneider lacks but Schneider nevertheless is able to perform some actions in an apparently flexible manner, such as those involved in the wallet making he worked with while in rehabilitation (Dreyfus 2007a, p. 63). When Dreyfus adds that Schneider is able to perceive stable sizes and shapes he seems to go to far in attributing abilities to Schneider compared with the empirical evidence presented by Gelb and Goldstein. Waldenfels also emphasises Merleau-Ponty's second line of argument concerning Schneider (Waldenfels 2000, ch. 3).

6.2.3 An impasse for Intellectualism and Zaner's contradiction

In *Phénoménologie de la Perception* the Schneider case is first introduced as a difficult case for what we might call an intellectualistic theory of action and it is in this part of Merleau-Ponty's discussion that we find the imminent contradiction indicated by Zaner. As a theory of action the view Merleau-Ponty criticizes under the heading of intellectualism implies that all intentional bodily actions can be analysed into two independent components. First, the conscious intention representing as a minimum the goal of the action and possibly also the movement to be performed. Second, a physical movement causally initiated by the representation but in itself to be explained in purely third-personal, naturalistic terms (cf. PP, p. 161, n. 1, SC, p. 188). As we have already seen Merleau-Ponty's critique of this dualism of intentions and movements is also applied to Liepmann's model which is not obviously intellectualistic in the strong sense. In the strong sense Intellectualism is committed to the idea that all conscious representational content, at least in the case of mature human beings, is conceptual content (PP, p. 121). It is such a strong Intellectualism that forms the target of Merleau-Ponty's first round of arguments against an intellectualistic interpretation of the case.[121]

It is a natural consequence of Intellectualism that all inabilities to perform actions in a normal way must be due to at least one of two factors: An impaired representational function or a purely physiological damage such as in the case of paralysis (cf. PP, p. 140). Consequently Intellectualism is committed to the claim that representational consciousness is a *necessary* and *sufficient* condition for the possibility of intentional actions, given that the purely physiological enabling conditions are fulfilled. We can call the two sides of the commitment of Intellectualism, the Necessity Thesis (I) and the Sufficiency Thesis (I). The two lines of argument concerning Schneider which give rise to the internal tension in Merleau-Ponty's text each target one of the two theses. In what follows I will reconstruct the two lines of arguments separately.

The first line of argument focuses on the preserved ability of Schneider to engage in concrete behaviour and carry out concrete movements (PP, pp. 120-124).

[121] The oscillation of the chapter on motility flows as follows: First a critique of an intellectualistic conception of psychology (PP, pp. 121-130), then the empiricist has a go at a causal explanation of the Schneider case (pp. 130-140), the criticism of which leads to the revival of intellectualism (pp. 140-148). The final defeat of intellectualism is said to justify the return of naturalism unless a new method is provided (p. 147).

With this line it is argued that a representational consciousness of the spatial location of one's own body and of surrounding objects is *not necessary* for a grasping to be directed towards such a location. Merleau-Ponty formulates the critical question which arises within the framework of Intellectualism as follows:

> Si je sais où est mon nez quand il s'agit de le saisir, comment ne saurais-je pas où est mon nez quand il s'agit de le montrer? (PP, p. 120) [122]

Such questions are troublesome for Intellectualism in Merleau-Ponty's depiction, because it is committed to the claim that all spatial awareness of an object consists in a conceptual representation of its location in an objective, three-dimensional space (PP, p. 121). Two representations differing in content can of course be of the same object. As Merleau-Ponty writes it takes an intellectual synthesis to come to realize that for instance the evening star and the morning star are but two appearances of the same object, called Venus (PP, p. 266). In the case of a representation of the location of for instance one's own nose one do not need any such intellectual synthesis in order to discover that the nose pointed to is the nose that one can also grasp. The location of the nose must according to Intellectualism be represented with the same sense, and if we are not to violate Frege's rationality constraint on the ascription of senses, the subject must be said to either have or not to have a representation of the location of the nose. [123]

The patient is able to perform a movement similar to the pointing except for the fact that the movement ends up in a grasping, therefore the pointing ought to be equally possible (PP, p. 142). To the extent the Intellectualist explains the inability to point by appeal to a disturbance of the spatial representations, the ability to grasp becomes proportionally inexplicable. The intellectualist could argue that when Schneider is capable of whisking away a mosquito from his nose, then this is no

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[122] In this formulation in the first- person Merleau-Ponty refers to another patient than Schneider, a patient who, in contrast to Schneider, was still able to grasp his nose on request, i.e. able to perform an arbitrary grasping (cf. PP, p. 120, n. 3).

[123] Bermúdez has proposed a re-interpretation of the Schneider case that regards the case as evidence for the existence of two different ways of representing the location of limbs and of points on one's own body. He argues that Merleau-Ponty's distinction between the experience of the phenomenal body and the experience of the body as an object is a difference at the level of sense and not at the level of reference ((Bermúdez 2005, p. 305). Embodied conceptualism has quarrel with Bermúdez' interpretation because he claims that the representations are non-conceptual. Furthermore I think his interpretation misses an essential pragmatic dimension of our bodily awareness, what Merleau-Ponty calls the 'I can'-awareness (cf. Grünbaum 2005, pp. 126-127).

different from what we can do in our sleep (cf. PP, p. 142). However, the fact that Schneider can perform concrete actions on command and not just when the appropriate stimuli are present makes it implausible to regard his behaviour as conditioned reflexes. As Goldstein states the patient performs the movement with some sense of spatial directedness which distinguishes them from the involuntary and forced movements of certain other patients with brain damage as well as from the reflex movements of a decapitated frog (Goldstein 1971, p. 273).[124]

The second line of argumentation focuses on the impaired ability of Schneider to engage in abstract behaviour and to perform abstract movements (PP, pp. 124-128). This line argues that a representational consciousness of a movement to be carried out, paired with the physical availability of the movement is *not sufficient* for the normal, swift execution of such movements. The second line of argument runs parallel with the line of argument we have already seen Merleau-Ponty employs in his interpretation of Liepmann's cases of motor apraxia:

> Ce qui lui manque n'est ni la motricité, ni la pensée, et nous sommes inviteés à reconnaître entre le mouvement comme processus en troisième personne et la pensée comme représentation du mouvement une anticipation ou une saisie du résultat assurée par le corps lui-même comme puissance motrice, un "projet moteur" (Bewegungsentwurf) une "intentionnalité motrice" sans lesquels la consigne demeure lettre morte. (PP, p. 128).[125]

When Schneider is asked to perform an abstract action, like a circular movement, he knows intellectually what he is supposed to do. Furthermore he is capable of recognizing the beginning of a circular movement when his 'blind' attempts take the right shape and immediately carry out the movement requested (PP, p. 128). The fact that a movement that is similar qua physical movement to the abstract task can be carried speaks against a purely physiological explanation of the difficulties of the

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[124] As Merleau-Ponty notes Goldstein comes close to identifying the grasping with a pure reflex in the text I refer to above. Merleau-Ponty states that Gelb and Goldstein have done more than any others to overcome the dichotomy between mind and body, but that they remain inchoately aware of the purport of their work and therefore tend to relapse into the dichotomy (PP, p. 142, n. 1).

[125] A homological argument is used when Merleau-Ponty discusses the linguistic disturbances of Schneider: 'Cette puissance essentielle à la parole, nous aurons chance de l'apercevoir dans les cas où, ni la pensée ni la <<motricité>> ne sont sensiblement atteintes et où cependant la <<vie>> du langage est alterée.' (PP, p. 228).

patient. Consequently Intellectualism is under pressure to give up the Sufficiency Thesis (I).

When formulated in terms of such negative conclusions, the two lines of arguments are clearly not inconsistent; they merely respectively target the Necessity Thesis (I) and the Sufficiency Thesis (I). It is not until we take a closer look at the positive conclusions that a contradiction threatens to make Merleau-Ponty's interpretation unintelligible. In the first instance Merleau-Ponty argues that we have to assume a non-representational anticipation of the completion or endpoint (*terme*/*fin*) of the movement, as that which enables Schneider's and related cases concrete movements of grasping (PP, p. 120). In the next instance he argues that we have to assume a non-representational anticipation of the objective (*résultat*) of the movement, called motor intentionality, as that which is missing in the case of Schneider and which normally enable us to perform the abstract movements (PP, p. 128).[126] In the second line of argument the normal performance of abstract movements is said to be assured by the body as motor power (*puissance motrice*, PP, p. 128). In the first line of argumentation the body of Schneider is characterized in similar terms as a power over a certain world (*puissance d'un certain monde*, PP, p. 124). It should be clear by now that the contradiction which Zaner indicated concerns the phenomenon of motor intentionality.

When Merleau-Ponty, after his long discussion of the Schneider case, concludes that we have finally reached an unequivocal understanding of motor intentionality as an original kind of intentionality, he characterizes the phenomena in the exact same terms he used to describe Schneider's intact grasping capacity (PP, p. 160). In Schneider's grasping behaviour he was said to magically anticipate the endpoint in a non-representational manner. A similar description is now given of the way a normal person is able to relate motor intentionally to objects and such motor intentionality is said to be what is disturbed in cases of motor apraxia. Apparently motor intentionality is both claimed to be what is preserved in the Schneider case and thereby enables the performance of concrete behaviour and claimed to be what is impaired in the Schneider case, an impairment which is to explain the disability to perform the abstract movements. If this is the case then either the interpretation is contradictory or it is

[126] I use Colin Smith's translation here, which I think captures the meaning of Goldstein's original presentation of the abstract movements. Goldstein speaks of Schneider's abstract movements as having a definite purpose or objective: '*Festgelegt ist wesentlich die Erfüllung eines bestimmten Zweckes, die Erreichung eines bestimmten Zieles der Bewegung.*' (Goldstein 1923, p. 179).

vacuous. It is contradictory if motor intentionality is at the same time and in the same respect ascribed to and denied ascription to Schneider. It is vacuous if all that is said is that motor intentionality is present precisely when we are to perform concrete action and vanishes when we are to perform abstract actions.

I don't think we are obliged to take Zaner's contradiction to be more than apparent. For Merleau-Ponty's text to come out as logically inconsistent we have to assume that he with the concept of motor intentionality intends to identify a cognitive function that can enter a binary variable as either present or absent. Such a conception of motor intentionality and the corresponding general conception of the mind as a collection of separable functions is exactly what Merleau-Ponty argues against (cf. Merleau-Ponty, pp. 139-49, 158). I do think, however, that the appearance of a contradiction is a consequence of an overestimation of the similarities between the between the normal and the pathological case in his first line of argument. In order to make this point let me first focus on Merleau-Ponty's general methodological considerations.

6.2.4. Methodological considerations

Anthony Marcel has put the constant problem of what to infer from psychopathological dissociations in the following way:

> Whether a psychological dissociation reveals a basic separation hidden by the normal integrated functioning or whether it reflects an abnormal mode or some compensatory attempt to deal with a dysfunction. (Marcel 2003, p. 56)

On the one hand dissociations might reveal the possible separations of two functions that in the normal case always travel together and therefore might not even have been suspected to be two distinct passengers. On the other hand the functioning which is present in the pathological case might merely reflect the fact that some normal function is disturbed and we should therefore be careful not to mistake a compensatory coping strategy for a normal function in splendid isolation. It is such a confusion Goldstein warns against when he writes that we should not mistake Schneider's swift performance of the abstract movements once he recognizes the beginning of the intended figure for the way we normally perform such actions. The precision and the uniformity of Schneider's abstract movements are exactly pathological features and therefore cannot

directly tell us something about the mechanisms that enable the normal execution of such movements (Goldstein 1973, p. 178).

In his general reflections on the methodology of psychopathology Merleau-Ponty puts emphasise on a method which seeks to make sense of the compensatory strategies via their indirect reference to fundamental features of our existence:

> Il faut comprendre les suppléances comme des suppléances, comme des allusion à une function fondamentale qu'elles essayent de remplacer et dont elles ne nous donnent pas l'images directe. (PP, p. 125).

The general methodological conclusion, which Merleau-Ponty reaches through his analysis of the Schneider case, is that we need to develop a new method of *existential* or *intentional* analysis which can make the pathological cases intelligible as variations of the total being of the subject (cf. PP, pp. 71, 158, 528).[127] The claim is that the cases cannot be understood by a merely causal mode of explanations which proceed by isolating variables that are either present or absent (cf. PP, p. 159).

In his interpretation of other aspects of Schneider's condition it is obvious that Merleau-Ponty interprets the dissociations found as reflecting a pathological mode which by contrast can make us aware of what the normal experience is like. He argues that the way Schneider identifies a visually presented object via conjectures and inferences can make the normal immediate configuration of the visually given evident to us:

> Ce procédé met en evidence, par contraste, la méthode spontanée de la perception normale, […].(PP, p. 153).

Neither the inferences nor the dissociated visual 'content' of the patient are elements which are to be found in the normal perception (PP, p. 160). The same goes for the tactile sensations of Schneider. When Goldstein says that only in the pathological case

[127] Here we get a glimpse of Merleau-Ponty's dialectic conception of the relation between psychopathology and philosophy. Philosophy can make use of psychopathology exactly because the latter must make the phenomena intelligible by reference to fundamental existential features and precisely because of this feature of psychopathology it stands in need of philosophical vigilance to avoid the traps of Objective Thought. In a catch phrase: induction without intuition of essences is blind and intuition of essences without induction is empty.

can we study the tactile sensations in themselves, Merleau-Ponty adds that Goldstein's own descriptions suggest that we cannot understand the pathological case as presenting us with a purified version of what is already present in the normal case:

> La conclusion est juste, mais elle revient à dire que le mot "toucher", appliqué au sujet normal et au malade, n'a pas le même sens, que le " tactile pure" est un phénomène pathologique qui n'entre pas comme composante dans l'expérience normale, que la maladie, en désorganisant la fonction visuelle, n'a pas mis à nu la pure essence du tactile, qu'elle modifié l'expérience entière du sujet, ou, si l'on préfère, qu'il n'y a pas chez le sujet normal une expérience tactile et une expérience visuelle, mais une expérience intégrale[…]. (PP, p. 138).

If we apply the integrative model used in the above quotation on the relation between the concrete and the abstract attitude this would mean that we should understand the pathological case as a case of disintegration of two attitudes and not just as the lapse of the abstract attitude. The consequence would be that 'concrete movement' would mean something different when applied to the pathological case than when applied to the normal case. The fact that this is the general structure of Merleau-Ponty's conception of the relation between the concrete and the abstract attitude comes out when he discusses Schneider's intellectual capacities. He argues that though Schneider's arithmetic capacity is somewhat diminished we cannot say that he is deprived of the concept of number, as he is able to count visually presented objects using his fingers (PP, p. 156). Furthermore he argues that in general we cannot speak of a pure concept of number which the normal person possesses and which Schneider is then deprived of, because even in the normal case the series of numbers is a structure which is more or less (*le plus et le moins*) tied to melodic series of kinaesthetic experiences (PP, p. 141). As Merleau-Ponty notes the same integrative model is found in Goldstein's work. At one point Goldstein concludes that even the grasping-attitude of the normal requires the categorical attitude (PP, p. 144, n.1, Goldstein 1971, pp. 279-280). The interdependence between the two attitudes in the normal case is what we have already seen emphasized by Goldstein and Scheerer, when they claim that the two attitudes are related as figure and ground in the normal case (Goldstein & Scheerer, 1964, p. 8).

The consequence of the integrative model is that we should not expect the concrete movements of Schneider to be of phenomenologically the same kind as that of the normal person moving under similar circumstance. To claim that the pathological

case provides an isolated version of a highest common factor shared with the normal case would neither be coherent with Merleau-Ponty's general methodology nor his reading of Gelb and Goldstein's work as on the verge of breaking with a merely causal mode of understanding. Such a claim does however seem to be the main thrust of Merleau-Ponty's first line of argument concerning Schneider.

The modest conclusion of the first line of arguments Merleau-Ponty is that at least in certain pathological cases we have evidence for a way of being directed towards objects in action which is independent of a conceptual understanding of the location of the object. Merleau-Ponty goes further that the modest conclusion when he applies the findings directly to the normal case. His text shifts between descriptions of the Schneider case and general descriptions (cf. PP, pp. 122-124):

> Ce n'est jamais notre corps objectif que nous mouvons, mais notre corps phenomenal, et cela sans mystére pusique c'est notre corps déja, comme puissance de telles et telles regions du monde, qui se levait vers les objets à saisir et qui les percevait (1). De meme le malade n'a pas à chercher pour les movements concrets une scene et un espace où les déployer, […]. (PP, p. 123).[128]

I think the best way to make this line of argument intelligible within the framework of *Phénoménologie de la perception* is to regard it as an attempt to employ the pathological case as a case where a certain aspect of the normal mode of motor intentionality is accentuated. On this interpretation the aspect of motor intentionality which is highlighted in the pathological case would be the non-conceptual and non-representational directedness, which is claimed to characterize the object-directed actions of the normal person as well. This makes Merleau-Ponty's first line of argument analogue to the way he argues that the synaesthetic effect of mescaline can be understood as an accentuation of a fundamental intertwinement of the senses already present in normal perception (PP, pp. 264-265). Merleau-Ponty does refer to the difficulties of 'stripping pure motor intentionality naked', only such talk appear in the

[128] It is in the run of the first line of argument that Merleau-Ponty confuses a statement of Goldstein's for a report made by Schneider (PP, p. 122). As I have shown in my master-thesis the first-person statement which Merleau-Ponty attributes to Schneider is in fact a first-person description provided by Goldstein to illustrate the normal mode of experience involved in performing habitual action in the flow of our daily life (cf. Goldstein 1923, p. 175). The misidentification relative to the first-person pronoun might be seen as symptom of Merleau-Ponty's exaggeration of the similarities between the pathological and the normal case in his first line of argument.

context of his arguments concerning the cases of motor apraxia, where motor intentionality is said to be revealed indirectly by its disturbed mode of functioning (PP, p. 161, n. 1).

After the run of the two lines of arguments Merleau-Ponty qualifies the difference between the patient and the healthy person. These qualifications make it evident that his interpretation is opposed to a common factor view of the experience of performing concrete actions. Merleau-Ponty claims that only when we realize that there is a certain way of structuring one's surroundings which serves as the background for normal movement and vision and that it is this structuring which is disturbed in the pathological case, will we be able to procure a coherent account of the dissociation of the grasping and the pointing attitude (PP, p. 133). Gelb and Goldstein report that when Schneider walks by the house of Goldstein he will not recognize it unless he already has the intention to pay Goldstein a visit (PP, p. 157). In accordance with this report Merleau-Ponty describes Schneider's condition as a contraction of the awareness of motor possibilities on the horizon (PP, pp. 136, 157, n. 5). The characterization of Schneider contrasts with Merleau-Ponty's description of the normal open-ended horizon of the field of action accompanied by full-fledged 'I can'- awareness:

> Quand je me déplace dans ma maison, je sais d'emblée et sans aucun discourse que marcher vers la salle de bain signifie passer prés de la chamber, que regarder la fenêtre signifie avoir la cheminée à ma gauche, et dans ce petit monde chaque geste, chaque perception se situe immédiatement par rapport à mille coordonnées virtuelle. (PP, pp. 150-51).

Let me sum up the conclusion of my discussion of the arguments based on the Schneider case. Merleau-Ponty downplays the differences between the pathological cases and the normal case in his first line of argument. The downplaying creates the impression that motor intentionality is claimed to be fully preserved in the Schneider case and consequently the appearance of a down right contradiction, since motor intentionality is simultaneously claimed to be what is disturbed in the case. To avoid the contradiction we need to accentuate the differences between the concrete actions of the patient and the corresponding actions performed by the normal person. In this light Merleau-Ponty's first line of argument can be read as highlighting an aspect of normal motor intentionality while at the same time regarding the way motor intentionality finds expression in the Schneider case as having undergone a thorough transformation. We

can with Merleau-Ponty speak of a contraction of the field of action in the case of Schneider. Motor intentionality is not a question of either/or; it is a matter of degree (*comporte le plus et le moins*, PP, pp. 141, 145, 156).

6. 3 Embodied conceptualism and motor intentionality

6.3.1 Embodied Conceptualism and visual pathologies

The modest conclusion of Merleau-Ponty's first line of argument was that at least in certain pathological cases we find a way of being directed towards an object that is independent of a conceptual understanding of the location of the object. I have proposed that we can read Merleau-Ponty's extrapolation of the case as an attempt to reveal an aspect of all our object-directed actions. Under such a reading the general claim the argument is supposed to substantiate is a claim about the existence of an inherent layer of non-representational motor intentionality persistent in all our intentional bodily action, even in the so called abstract movements. In order to make this line of argument coherent with Merleau-Ponty's second line of argument we need to claim that the original functioning of motor intentionality has been distorted in the case of Schneider. Such an interpretation still implies a disanalogy between the way the case is used to make motor intentionality evident and the way it is used to make the normal configuration of the visual field evident. As regards perception the pathological conditions are used to bring forth the normal workings of operant intentionality solely by its contrastive distortion. As regards the elucidation of motor intentionality the case serves the further purpose of highlighting the non-representational aspect of the object-directed bodily actions via its perspicuous presence in the Schneider case.

I will argue that embodied conceptualism can provide an alternative framework for making the pathological cases in question intelligible. The proposal is that we can at least begin to make sense of the cases by regarding them as cases of disintegration of on the one hand sensibility and motility and on the other hand spontaneity. I shall first argue that this can be done with regard to the perceptual disturbances. In the following section I argue that a similar interpretation is open concerning the motor disturbances of Schneider. Finally, I argue that this leaves the first line of argument hanging in the air and that trying to hold on to it will result in us losing our grip on our conception of ourselves as agents who can engage in intentional bodily actions.

In Merleau-Ponty's further characterizations of the case of Schneider he describes the primordial function which is disturbed as a projection function (PP, p. 129). The projection function is said to construct an anthropological space on top of the primordial geographical or natural environment (PP, p. 30). The projection function 'conjures up' a manifold of signs that direct our actions like the signs of a museum direct the visitors (é*vocation*, PP, p. 130). Further the isolated sensations present in the pathological case are said to figure in normal consciousness as 'motives' or 'points of support' rather than as isolated impressions (PP, pp. 154, 155). The projection function is said to promote the free development of such 'motives' which goes beyond their own meaning (PP, p. 159). We might say that 'projection function' is here used as a term that puts emphasis on the practical dimension of the configuration of the perceptual world that Merleau-Ponty generally describes as procured by *operating intentionality*.

Merleau-Ponty is perfectly aware of the risk of adopting the mythology of pure sensations in his characterization of the projection function. He defines the intellectual task we are facing as one of describing the *milieu* where the antinomy between matter and form becomes conceivable (PP, p. 148). In the case of Schneider the contradiction we need to be make conceivable is that apparently he is both able to see and not able to see. He can see in the sense that he has sensuous impression. He cannot see in the sense of being able to visually point out features of his environment and on the basis of such 'carving out' make non-inferential judgements about the objects seen. Cases such as Schneider help to bring out the shortcomings of the empiricist reduction of perception to content and of the intellectualistic idea that the form of perception must be autonomous in relation to the content (PP, p. 147).[129] Because we cannot understand the impairment as pertaining unambiguously to either the autonomous form or to contingent content, such cases will stand out as paradoxical as long as we think in terms of the dualism of schema and content.

Embodied conceptualism does not need to place the responsibility of the disturbance in either a disturbance of the conceptual form or in a distortion of the non-conceptual content because it regards the content of perception as already given in a conceptual form. According to embodied conceptualism the possibility of a disturbance

[129] Here Merleau-Ponty uses 'content' in the sense it is used in Davidson's schema-content dichotomy. It is the idea of in themselves meaningless sensations the lot of which according to Empiricism is somehow to make intentionality possible.

of the co-operation of receptivity and spontaneity is a real possibility. As Merleau-Ponty states the disturbance experienced by Schneider is not metaphysical, it is the result of being hit by mine-splinters in the occipital region of the brain (PP, p. 146). As argued by Merleau-Ponty this fact does not imply that the disturbances can be made fully intelligible in merely causal terms. We can take the workings of spontaneity to depend on the workings of the brain without identifying the perceptual experience and our intentions and tryings with brain events if we take on board the idea of a dual conception of natural occurrences.

Some of Merleau-Ponty's characterizations of the pathological cases can be directly accommodated by embodied conceptualism: in the Schneider case it is the 'junction' of sensibility and the meaning-giving that is broken; it is the 'intentional arch' that provides the unity of the senses and the intellect which is loosened (PP, p. 158). In cases of colour amnesia what is affected is said to be the grip spontaneity has on the sensible world (PP, p. 224). Merleau-Ponty puts it in Kantian terms and says that it is the productive imaginations and not understanding as such (*Verstand*) that is affected. McDowell uses Kant's notion of the productive imagination as a name for a cognitive function which is essentially involved in the bringing forth of the intuitional content in which we have presented not only flat surfaces but full-blown objects with a categorical unity (McDowell 2008a, p. 5). It is such a presentation of the objects in their bodily presence which the patients suffering from apperceptive visual agnosia lack (*presence charnelle*, PP, p. 127).

On Merleau-Ponty's account the visual pathologies in question are an expression of a disturbance of operant intentionality. However as we saw above his account also appeals to the idea of a function that serves to integrate sensibility and spontaneity. Merleau-Ponty's account seems be faced with a dilemma here. The dilemma is a consequence of the following two options: Either Merleau-Ponty maintains that it is, as he puts it, the *milieu* where judgement or spontaneity is given birth and not spontaneity itself that is affected (cf. PP, p. 224), or he claims that it is an original integration of sensibility and spontaneity that is disturbed. If we choose the former option we will face the difficulties I expounded in *Chapter 5*. If we choose the latter option the position merges with embodied conceptualism.

The intellectual task at hand was defined by Merleau-Ponty as the task of making it intelligible that there is a *milieu* where the contradiction between the idea of a grounding empirical content or matter and the idea of the necessarily conceptual form of

judgements can be overcome. The first option mentioned above, consists in the claim that the *milieu* where we are to make the apparent contradiction between matter and form conceivable is intelligible on its own term, i.e. without presupposing the intelligibility of spontaneity. It is by appealing to the basis of an original *milieu* brought forth by the impregnating of meaning on the given sensibles that we are first to make spontaneity intelligible. Here the gap between the form impregnated on the sensible and the conceptual form of judgements opens. Further we face the problems of accounting for the intrinsic normativity of the primordial field of perception that I exposed in *Chapter 5*. The alternative option is to put emphasis on the descriptions I draw attention to above, in which Merleau-Ponty speaks of the spontaneity as loosing its grip on the sensible world. Now we are no longer trying to make the pathological cases comprehensible by appealing to something that is itself intelligible independently of a reference to spontaneity. When Merleau-Ponty writes the following, it can be read as pointing in the same direction:

> De sorte qu'on ne peut pas dire que l'homme voit parce qu'il est Esprit, ni d'ailleurs qu'il est Esprit parce qui'il voit: voir comme un homme voit et être Esprit sont synonymes. (PP, p. 149).

If we choose this second option the interpretation of the pathological cases becomes virtually indistinguishable from what we can say on the basis of embodied conceptualism. According to embodied conceptualism the apparent antinomy between the idea of contingent empirical content and autonomous conceptual forms is resolved when we realize that we are entitled to regard the content of perception as through and through conceptual. Perception is not blind because it never travels without the light of spontaneity and thoughts are not empty because they can be corrected by the world as it is made manifest in perception through the passive actualization of conceptual capacities in sensuous awareness.

6.3.2 Embodied conceptualism and the motor disturbances

Returning to the disturbances of Schneider's motility I want to propose a possible way of describing such disturbances from the perspective of embodied conceptualism. We can regard such cases as cases of disintegration of the normal integration of motility and practical spontaneity.

In the healthy person there is an ability to freely and flexibly move forth and back between actualizing teleologically basic capacities that are more or less immediate in relation to the objective the agent has in mind. We can speak of basic actions as being more or less immediate in relation to the objective of the agent according to how much practical means-end knowledge the agent actualizes in order to reach her objective by performing her teleologically most basic action. If my objective is to get my shoelaces tied then tying my shoelaces might be my teleologically most basic action and my basic action is as immediate as it gets. If my shoelaces are frozen and I am wearing thick gloves then I might need to bend the laces with force and even need to intentionally grasp the lace between my thumb and my index finger in order to get a hold on it. The normal fluidity of the action is carved out into smaller actions carried out as basic. In the normal person the flexibility to move up and down between more or less immediate basic actions gives series of actions their flow. When driving a car my gear shifting might meet unexpected resistance and I immediately lower the degree of immediacy of my teleologically most basic action. I intentionally apply a bit more force or I loosen my grip in order to reach a higher gear and accelerate the car.

Besides from a repertoire of acquired basic practical capacities we also possess the ability to simply move for the sake of moving. We constantly and passively engage in idle moving of our body. We move our tongue around in our mouth, we tap our fingers, bob our feet and rock our torso forth and back. While engaging in idling we do not experience any loss of agency, and there is no need for a searching for the relevant limbs if we decide to engage in some intentional action. Even if I am at a given moment not actually performing any intentional bodily action my awareness of my body is the awareness of a potential for intentional actions. My self-awareness as agent is my awareness of this potential; an awareness we, with Merleau-Ponty, can refer to as an ‘I can’-awareness. At any moment I can modify my idle moving into an intentional moving with a certain purpose. The counterpart in perception is the awareness of intuitional content as embodying an immediate potential that can be actualized in my carving out of features of the presented objects. Even if I am at a given moment not carving out any features of the objects that are given in my intuition they are given as potential objects of a modified perception in which I attend to the object in an objectifying modus and carve out aspects of the intuitional content.

The fact that we do not just have teleologically basic capacities to perform action that are ‘at a distance’ from our bodily movements but can return to our bodies

and make arbitrary movements is crucial for our freedom in action. If I did not have the capacity to simply stop moving or to let my movements spin in an aimless running on the spot I would be forced to engage in a new intentional bodily action in order to interrupt the one I am engaged in. My situation would be the practical analogue to a person who could only come to change his mind about a matter of fact by believing something contradictory to what he initially thought. Such a person would not be able to step back and assess the putative reasons for a belief. He would only change his mind if he already had a belief which he discovers to be in contradiction to another of his beliefs or if he just arbitrarily changed his viewpoint. A person without the potential to deliberately disengage himself from a goal-directed bodily activity without immediately turning to another action would not be able to step back and question the ends of his actions. He would only be able to change the purpose he has in mind by assuming a contrary purpose.

Returning once again to the visual disturbances found in cases of apperceptive visual agnosia it seems that they are at least partly disturbances of the ability to passively actualize concepts of common sensibles such as the form and size of objects in our perceptual experience. This is what we can express by saying that spontaneity has lost its grip on the sensible world. If I lack such a capacity I cannot have my basic recognitional capacities intact, i.e. the capacities to non-inferentially see what is the case. According to embodied conceptualism some basic empirical concepts must be actualized in perception in a non-propositional but conceptual unity, if I am to see any object at all. I may make inferences on the basis of such observations and I may even have acquired concepts which are immediately and passively actualized when I perceive an object of a certain kind. An ornithologist may have the visual capacity to immediately recognize a cardinal as a cardinal and may gain non-inferential knowledge about the fact that a specific bird is a cardinal simply by perceiving the bird (cf. McDowell 2008a, p. 3).[130] However if he is in doubt about whether some bird is a cardinal he will usually be able to look for traits which will count as evidence. In other words he will be able to inferentially achieve the same knowledge he would have achieved immediately had the bird been presented in plain view. Not all observational

[130] This idea is the first of the two changes McDowell makes in 'Avoiding the Myth of Given' (2008a). The idea is that we can be entitled to non-inferential observational beliefs without the content of the belief being embodied in the non-discursive, intuitional content of perception.

knowledge can be based on the presence of such circumstantial evidence. If there was no possibility of an immediate translation of my perceptual content into the content of a belief, I could not have the world manifest itself in my experience. I would need to construct a world view based on experiences that fall short of the facts of the world and we would loose the idea of perception as the place where my belief can be corrected by the world's direct manifestation. In cases of visual form agnosia the subject still have some disfigured sensuous experiences with conceptual content which can serve as the basis for inferential knowledge, but such experiences are only intelligible as the basis for inferential knowledge if we understand them as aberrations from the normal experiences. They could not serve as the basis of our original openness to the world.

Coming back to Schneider's motor disturbances we may say that it is the practical analogue of the basic observational concepts which is disturbed in his case and this may be a way to at least make certain symptoms comprehensible. Goldstein notes that when Schneider succeeds in carrying out some abstract movements they are performed with a precision and a uniformity which is pathological (Goldstein 1923, p. 170). When Schneider is asked to pretend he salutes an officer he must first make some apparently random jerks with his body in order to locate his hand, after which he carries out the action with an unusual precision and without the usual variation in how the task is solved on different occasions. Goldstein observes how Schneider lacks the ability to cope with unforeseen changes in a situation that is essential to the normal subject (Goldstein 1923, p. 170). When he met unforeseen hindrances while carrying out abstract movements his movements were interrupted and he could only complete the task piecemeal, in what Goldstein describes as isolated, arbitrary movements (Goldstein 1923, pp. 176-177). In the terminology applied here, we may say that what is impeded is the ability to flexibly shift between more or less immediate basic actions relative to the objective of the agent. The fact that the movements which appear to cause the most trouble for Schneider are bodily movement carried out as isolated and arbitrary movements suggests that it is the basic 'I can'-awareness which holds all our teleologically basic capacities together which is disturbed. The fact that such motor impairments goes together with a visual form agnosia indicates, as stressed by Merleau-Ponty, that there exists an internal connection between sensibility and motility. Embodied conceptualism suggests that this internal connection is in the case of mature human beings a consequence of spontaneity permeating at once our sensibility and our motility.

What embodied conceptualism suggests is to generalize Merleau-Ponty's conclusion concerning the linguistic disturbances of Schneider and other pathological cases. Merleau-Ponty uses such cases to contrastively highlight what he takes to be the essential structures of linguistic capacities and concludes as follows:

> On ne peut dire de la parole ni qu'elle est une « operation de l'intelligence » ni qu'elle est un « phénomène moteur »: elle est tout entière motricité et tout entière intelligence. (PP, p. 227).

Similarly we may say that our intentional bodily actions are through and through the operation of our spontaneity and through and through the actualization of our motility. Our motility is permeated with practical spontaneity.

6.3.3 Embodied conceptualism and motor intentionality

However, it might still be claimed that there is a relevant disanalogy between Schneider's visual and his motor disturbances. Schneider was capable of carrying out the so called concrete actions, like engaging in the activities required to carry out his job as *portefeuiller* at the habilitation clinic. Furthermore, it could be claimed, this is not so much of a disanalogy because Schneider's vision is in fact working perfectly well when it is to guide such practical engagement with the environment. This line of reasoning would constitute an attempt to hold on to the strong interpretation of the first line of argument. In the strong interpretation it is claimed that what is revealed by its perspicuous intactness in the Schneider case is a necessary condition for all intentional bodily actions. What is disturbed is a layer of spatial and visual understanding which is build on top of the primordial level of motor intentionality. This is the line of argument pursued by Sean Kelly, who has recently presented arguments for the need to assume a basic notion of non-conceptual motor intentionality which run parallel to Merleau-Ponty's first line of argument. I think this line of argument faces problems analogue to the problem we face if we try to explain the inherent normativity of perception by appealing to a primordial level of perception prior to any distinction between veridical and non-veridical perception.

Kelly interprets the Schneider case as a case in which we find "a kind of pure motor intentionality" (Kelly 2004, p. 75). In line with what I have termed Merleau-Ponty's first line of argumentation Kelly argues that the skilful coping of normal subjects involves the same kind of experience as that of Schneider (Kelly 2004, p. 75,

cf. Kelly 2000, p. 168). He further argues that the dissociation found in the Schneider case is in important respects similar to the more recent case of DF described by Goodale and Milner.

DF's condition has been diagnosed as apperceptive visual agnosia. Just like Schneider, DF has problems recognizing the shape and orientation of visually presented objects. However, if she is to grasp an object she can grasp it with accuracy indistinguishable from that of a normal sighted (Goodale and Milner 2005, p. 21ff). In another experiment DF was presented with a vertical display with a slot cut into it that could be rotated to different orientations. DF was given a card with a size that just made it possible for it to be pushed through the slot. She was then either asked to show the orientation of the slot by orientating the card so that it matches the slot and without moving her hand toward the slot or she was asked to "post" the card through the slot. The latter task she managed almost as well as a normal sighted, whereas her attempts at solving the first task were close to random (Goodale and Milner 2005, p. 20). In simplified terms the explanation of the dissociation given by Goodale and Milner is that our visual system has to ways of processing visual information, one used for the immediate unconscious visual control of skilled action (the dorsal stream) and another used for the conscious, visual perception of for instance the size, orientation and shape of the object (the ventral stream). According to Milner and Goodale it is the ventral stream that is deficient in the case of DF whereas the dorsal stream of information is still working impeccably.

Kelly suggests that if Goodale and Milner's dual-pathway hypothesis is correct it could provide an explanation at the neural level of the phenomenological distinction Merleau-Ponty draws between two kinds of spatial understanding, one involved in grasping and the other involved in pointing (Kelly 2000, p. 172, 2003 p. 66).[131] He further makes use of the case of DF to underpin two of his main thesis concerning motor intentionality. *First*, he argues that the case demonstrate the existence of non-conceptual motor intentionality present in object-directed actions such as grasping. *Second*, he argues that the case of DF provides substantial evidence for his thesis that motor intentional content is content that it is in principle impossible to

[131] Goodale and Milner also talks about how the perception of location is compromised in the case of DF just as is the perception of orientation and geometrical features of the object (Goodale and Milner 2005, p. 80).

articulate conceptually (Kelly 2005, p. 11). In contrast to Merleau-Ponty Kelly emphasizes that the content of motor intentionality is representational. Kelly argues that motor intentionality is representational in the sense that it involves a non-conceptual representation of the object as being in certain way (Kelly 2005, p. 17, Kelly 2004, pp. 73-74). In motor intentional activities we are said to take into account a multiplicity of aspects of the object acted on such as its size, shape, orientation, weight and fragility and do so in manner that orientate us towards the object in its entirety (Kelly 2000, p. 174). Further, motor intentional activities are said to essentially disclose the world to us (Kelly 2004, p. 75).

Kelly argues that in the case of DF there is no possible distinction between the attitude and the content of the motor intentional activity. The lack of such a possible distinction he takes to support his claim that the motor intentional content is in principle ungraspable in conceptual thought. It may seem that DF could make her motor understanding of the orientation the content of a propositional attitude by referring to the way she puts her hand through the slot. She could for instance say, "I believe that the slot is orientated *this* way", as she pushes her hand through the slot (Kelly 2004, p. 74). Such an indirect reference to the orientation via a reference to the hand is however different from the direct sensitivity to the actual orientations which is displayed in the motor activity. To use an analogy of Adrian Cussins': It is like the pointing to a dancer saying, 'Look there! *That's* what the dance expresses' (Cussins 2003, p. 162). Just as such a demonstrative reference could be claimed not to tell us anything about the nature of the content expressed in the dance, so the possibility of referring to the motor intentional activity does, according to Kelly, not tell us anything about the content of such activity. Because the motor understanding involves sensitivity to the actual orientation, Kelly argues, the content of the motor intentional activity of DF cannot be specified independently of the actual activity and so is not a content that can figure as content of various attitudes. If this is the case then motor intentional content is of a kind that cannot even in principle become conceptualized. It is this strong thesis about the inaccessibility to conceptual consciousness which Kelly argues we can transfer to the normal subject (Kelly 2004, p. 25). The critical question is whether this extrapolation of his conclusions concerning the case of DF is justified.

There are relevant differences in the way perception shapes the intentional, object-directed actions of the visually agnostic and the way a normal sighted acts on the perceived. Just by looking at an object a normal sighted can carve out

different affordances of an object. If I am looking at a knife I can switch between seeing it as affording different actions. I can see it as needing grinding or I can see it as 'matter out of place' and so as affording the action of putting it into the drawer where it is supposed to be. Because of DF's form agnosia objects will not immediately present the same action potentials as they do for a normal sighted. How the normal ability to see the use of an object reflects on our grasping of objects can be seen from an experiment where subjects are asked to pick up a screwdriver. The normal sighted will usually grasp the screwdriver by the handle also in cases where the handle is positioned so that they have to adopt a rather awkward hand posture. DF, who is unable to recognize the screwdriver, will grasp it by its shaft if that is what is pointing towards her (Goodale and Milner 2005, p. 107). In the experiment with the screwdriver my action would be intentional under the description, 'grasping that screwdriver by the handle'. We can say that my teleologically basic trying is, 'trying to grasp that screwdriver by the handle'. A visual form agnostic would not be able to perform a similar intentional action. We might describe her trying as, 'trying to grasp some object in front of me'.

It is true that when I am to grasp and lift an object I do not normally consider how to adopt the aperture of my grip to the object or how much force to use. My action is not intentional under a description that specifies the details of my bodily movement as they are described, for instance, by bio-mechanics, nor is it intentional under the description of grasping an object that is, for instance, six inches wide. However, this does not show that my awareness of the object and of my bodily activity is not conceptual. My perceptual awareness of the handle of the screwdriver as affording grasping is conceptual in the sense that there is no aspect of the content of my awareness that *could not* serve as input to by practical rationality. And my awareness of my bodily activity is conceptual in the sense that there is no aspect of my bodily activity that could not be intentionally modified in case I should meet unforeseen hindrances or simply decide to experiment with my way of performing actions that are otherwise performed as teleologically basic actions.

It is true that in my grasping the handle I have a motor understanding of the object which is unique compared to any perceptual carving out of affordances for use in my practical deliberation. This is comparable to the way the intuitional content of perception will always exceed my actual carving out of aspects of the intuitional content for use in my theoretical deliberations. We might speak of motor content as a counterpart to intuitional content and say that we manifest a motor understanding of an

object in our acting on it just like an object manifest itself in our intuition when we perceive it. Embodied conceptualism can recognize that there is an original kind of perceptual intentionality and still claim that such intuitional intentionality has conceptual content. Similarly embodied conceptualism can claim that there is an original kind of motor intentionality characteristic of object-directed embodied tryings and still maintain that the intentionality of embodied tryings is conceptual. There is no aspect of the motor content that cannot be articulated so as to contribute to the content of our means-end deliberation. Whether it is the size, shape, orientation, weight or fragility of an object we might take them into consideration when deliberating about what to do and about how to do it. In other words the features of the object we are aware of when we act on it are the features which could serve as reasons for actions if we were to step back and deliberate.

My awareness of my own bodily activity is conceptual in the sense that there is no aspect of my bodily activity that I cannot intentionally modify. I can grasp faster, higher and stronger and such modification of my grasping activity can be intentional. Such modifications are in fact modifications of my embodied trying and it is crucial that they do not immediately disturb my perceptual awareness of the affordances I act on. I can stay in the flow of the activity while flexibly modifying my embodied trying. This is why we can say that in the experiment which I mentioned in the *Introduction*, in which the subject sub-consciously control the unpleasant sounds by twitching his fingers, we are not dealing with a case of intentionally doing anything. The subject has no way of modifying the activity intentionally; she can only intervene in order to hinder its unfolding or she can let it unfold without any control over the way it oscillates in response to the perceptual stimuli. The movements are not agency-involving and so do not display motor intentionality.

Kelly could object that in stepping back from actually acting on an affordance, we immediately and necessarily turn the affordance into something else namely the content of a conceptual awareness, which in principle cannot access the motor content of our bodily activities. Noticing either features of the object or noticing what my hand is doing 'breaks the spell that the world had over it' (Kelly 2005, p. 20). Kelly argues that the experience of solicitations or affordances is intrinsically motivating and that this is reflected in what he takes to be an essential characteristic of motor intentional activity (Kelly 2005, p. 21): it is in principle impossible that there should be a mismatch or slippage between the activity which is solicited by the

perceived affordances and the activity one actually engages (Kelly 2005, p. 19). Motor intentional activities are *qua* motor intentional phenomena infallible and it is only when we retrospectively interpret the activity in terms of conceptual reasons that they may appear as mistakes.

I think this model makes it impossible to understand how we should ever be able to perform any intentional bodily actions, because it makes the transition between unreflectively carrying out an action and one's intentional modification of one's teleologically most basic trying unintelligible. If it is in principle impossible that it is an element of the content of the motor intentional activity that the activity has to be appropriately coordinated with objective reality (cf. (Kelly 2004, p. 21), then the world of affordances becomes a dream world. Kelly argues that when standing in front of a *trompe d'oeil* painting of a door I might be genuinely solicited to walk through the door and instead walk right into the wall. The fact that one would afterwards say that one thought there was a door does, according to Kelly, not imply that it was part of the motor intentional content that there was a door there (Kelly 2005, p. 21). In genuinely absorbed coping there is no room for any intending or trying or hoping to go through the door, we simply respond in an infallible way to the solicitations of the world (cf. Kelly 2005, p. 20). If this is the true nature of unreflective skilful coping it becomes a mystery how, once we are absorbed, we should ever have the experience of not succeeding and so simultaneously how we should ever have the experience of actually succeeding. If there is no inherent possibility of a mismatch at the level of absorbed coping there is no room for any motivation that could ever give rise to the reflective attitude and we are lost in absorption. We are in a predicament similar to the predicament of the position of phenomenological naturalism when it claims that at the original layer of perception there is no distinction between a veridical and a non-veridical perception. We cannot make beliefs intelligible as possible corrections of perceptual mistakes if no mistakes are possible at the original level of perception. Similarly we cannot make bodily tryings intelligible as possible modifications of motor intentional activities if no mistakes are possible at the level of unreflective skilful coping.

Our perceptual experiences and the bodily activities that are expressive of our agency are what they are by virtue of being actualizations of the same capacity that allows us to step back and ask whether we have reason to believe and whether we have reason to act.

CONCLUSION

In the first part of this thesis I have argued that there is a transcendental problem of agency corresponding to the transcendental problem of perception diagnosed by McDowell. The problem of agency is the problem of making it intelligible that we are creatures who can perform bodily intentional actions, i.e. actions that are carried out through the execution of bodily movements. Our status as bodily agents is threatened when we assume that the motility of our body must be susceptible to a natural scientific explanation that in principle can explain all aspects of the capacity of our body to execute movements. On such an assumption it follows that it must be possible to make the occurrences of all bodily movements intelligible independently of any reference to the presence of rational agents in the world. When we are to understand our capacities as rational agents we therefore have to reconstruct our notion of bodily actions in terms of such agency-neutral movement and add some mental item such as an intention or a trying by virtue of which the movements can become expressions of agency. Such mental items might be claimed to be dependent for their existence on the existence of a body with which they are actually or potentially could be suitably connected. However, the connection with a body can amount to no more than a merely causal connection. This is a corollary of the Scientific Naturalism which in the first place led to the idea that all bodily movements are agency-neutral.

According to Scientific Naturalism all natural events that are causally related must be identifiable as events that can be given a natural scientific explanation. This is the Scientific Monism of events which may or may not be combined with anomalous monism. If the bodily movements that are involved in bodily actions can be given an exhaustible explanation by natural science, then the capacity to perform bodily action must be intelligible in terms of merely causal connections between mental items and the agency-neutral motility of the body. However, in order for it to be intelligible that a person can intentionally carry out bodily actions it is not enough that we ascribe some causal power to mental events like tryings or intentions. If such events are to be recognizable as tryings or as intentions we must be able to make it intelligible how they can lead to the intended outcome and not just how they can *qua* brain events cause some neuro-physiological processes. We must be able to make sense of the agent's possession of at least some teleologically basic practical capacities. Within the framework of Scientistic Naturalism this requirement seems unrealizable. If the causal powers of the

agent is restricted to the causal powers of her mental occurrences *qua* brain events then the fact that she can, at least sometimes, succeed in achieving what she was trying to achieve becomes mysterious. She succeeds by virtue of some causal mechanisms of which she may have no knowledge and which cannot be rationally constrained by her intentions. Under such circumstances her capacity to carry out her intentions takes on the appearance of a telekinetic power to move objects around solely by having something in mind.

If we deny the Scientific Monism of events we gain a way of making bodily actions intelligible. We can claim that some bodily movements are essentially agency-involving. When we carry out a bodily action we move our body and by doing so we actualize basic practical capacities. Such capacities cannot be made intelligible in separation from the motility of our body and our motility cannot be made intelligible in separation from our teleologically basic capacities, i.e. from basic practical concepts. Bodily movements without practical concepts are mere happenings and tryings without motility are not really happening at all. The consequence of this idea is what I call a dual conception of bodily movements. When we individuate a bodily movement as the movement of a rational agent we do not at the same time identify an event or series of events that could be given a natural-scientific explanation. We make the movements intelligible in terms of the rational practical capacities of the agent to perform bodily intentional actions and such intelligibility is *sui generis* in relation to the intelligibility provided by natural science.

To deny the monism of events of Scientistic Naturalism is not to deny the value of natural science nor is to deny the validity of natural scientific investigations. It is simply to deny that all empirical occurrences are of a kind that is intelligible in the way science makes events intelligible. Once we allow for essentially agency-involving movements we can also make sense of the idea of essentially movement-involving tryings. Such tryings not only relate to bodily movement form the outside in the way we relate to objects in perception. The tryings are expressed in the bodily activities and such activities embody our tryings. Consequently, we can deny that the possibility of a trying-experience indistinguishable from an actual bodily doing, forces us to the conclusion that tryings are essentially independent of bodily movements. We can formulate a disjunctivism of trying: Any trying is either an idle trying or it is an essentially embodied trying.

The combination of the idea of embodied tryings and the idea of bodily movements as essentially agency-involving by virtue of basic practical concepts I call embodied conceptualism concerning bodily agency.

In the second part of this thesis I return to the issue of perception that was the primary subject of the first two chapters of the first part. I expound and develop McDowell's new conception of the content of perception as non-propositional yet conceptual content. I argue that this view is well motivated and has significant advantages compared to McDowell's former view. In order to challenge what I call embodied conceptualism concerning perception I draw on the early works of Merleau-Ponty. I argue that McDowell's new position can provide answers to the challenges I raise on the background of Merleau-Ponty's work. In turn I argue that Merleau-Ponty's own position possesses an inherent tension, which I identify as a new version of the oscillation between the Myth of Given an Coherentism. In the case of Merleau-Ponty the tension between the two positions is moved from the relation between beliefs and perception out into perception itself. Merleau-Ponty's move is motivated by a deep insight in the need to recognise the non-propositional nature of the meaning we are presented with in perception. However, such meaning can be conceived as conceptual if we do not over-intellectualise the mind as we do if we take concepts to be intelligible in abstraction from their use in a shared life-world. If we refuse to take on board the idea of a conceptual, non-discursive content of perception there seem to be good reasons to suspect that the restless oscillation McDowell pinpoints will find its way into our thinking in some disguise or another.

After my critic of Merleau-Ponty's conception of perception I turn to his exposition of the transcendental problem of bodily agency. I argue that his use of the case of Schneider contains a fundamental methodological ambiguity. I demonstrate how we might overcome the ambiguity if we adopt embodied conceptualism concerning perception and concerning bodily agency. Finally I show how Kelly's appropriation of Merleau-Ponty's notion of motor intentionality faces difficulties that were already imminent in Merleau-Ponty's own account. The account seems to face fundamental difficulties that I diagnose as a consequence of the idea of a split between our life as rational agents and our life as embodied agents. We can overcome the difficulties if we can make sense of the idea that our most basic bodily coping skills are permeated with practical concepts. This is what I have argued we can and this is what is claimed by embodied conceptualism.

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Afhandlingsresumé

Handling og Perception. En analogisk tilgang

I første del af afhandlingen argumentere jeg for eksistensen af et problem med hensyn til handling, der er analog med det problem, som McDowell har diagnosticeret som et transcendentalt problem med hensyn til perception. Perceptionens problem er hvorledes perception kan ligge rationelle bånd på vores formodninger. Handlingens problem er hvorledes vore intentioner kan komme rationelt til udtryk i vore kropslige bevægelser. McDowell finder roden til perceptionens problem i antagelsen om at alle naturlige hændelser må kunne forklares udelukkende ved brug af naturvidenskabelige metoder: Videnskabelig Naturalisme. Jeg argumenterer for at Videnskabelig Naturalisme fører til et tilsvarende problem, når vi forsøger at gøre vores evne til at udføre kropslige handlinger forståelig indenfor dens rammer.

Jeg viser hvorledes Videnskabelig Naturalisme fører til en opfattelse af kropslige bevægelser som agent-neutrale hændelser, samt hvorledes en sådan opfattelse synes dømt til at gøre vores opfattelse af os selv som handlende individer ubegribelig. Hvis vi hævder, at vi kan gøre vores bevægelses-evne forståelig uafhængig af nogen henvisning til handlende individer, da underminerer vi muligheden for at give mening til ideen om os selv som besiddende handlemuligheder. Som alternativ foreslår jeg en dobbelt opfattelse af bevægelser, ifølge hvilken bevægelser der er involverede i intentionelle handlinger, er af en slags der kun kan gøres forståelige, hvis vi anser dem for at være udtryk for rationelle agenters handlekraft. Når vi først har etableret denne mulighed, bliver det tilmed muligt at opfatte vores forsøg på at udrette noget som essentielt kropslige. Vi kan formulere en disjunktivisme med hensyn til forsøg: enten er et forsøg et tomt forsøg eller også er det et essentielt kropsliggjort forsøg. Kombinationen af ideen om kropsliggjorte forsøg samt ideen om essentielt agent-involverende bevægelser kalder jeg kropsliggjort konceptualisme. Jeg benytter dette navn, fordi ideen om agent-involverende bevægelser er ideen om bevægelser, der er udtryk for en agents basale teleologiske kapaciteter og sådanne kapaciteter er essentielt begrebslige.

I anden del af afhandlingen argumenterer jeg for at McDowells nye opfattelse af perceptuelt indhold som ikke-propositional men stadigvæk begrebsligt indhold, har betydelige fordele i forhold til propositional konceptualism. Jeg argumenterer for at denne nye opfattelse kan give tilfredsstillende svar på de udfordringer, der rejser sig når vi bringer den tidlige Merleau-Pontys værker ind i billedet. Yderligere argumenterer jeg for at Merleau-Pontys opfattelse af perceptionen rummer en iboende spænding, som jeg identificerer som en ny udgave af oscillationen mellem Myten om det Given samt Kohærentisme. I den sidste del af afhandlingen viser jeg hvorledes Merleau-Ponty's argumenter for nødvendigheden af at antage en ikke-begrebslig motorisk intentionalitetstype rummer en tvetydighed, der korresponderer med den spænding, jeg fandt i hans perceptions opfattelse. Jeg argumenterer for at kropsliggjort konceptualisme formår at afklare disse tvetydigheder.

Abstract

Action and Perception. An analogical approach

In the first part of the thesis I argue that there is a problem concerning bodily agency which is the analogue of the problem McDowell has diagnosed as the transcendental problem of perception. The problem of perception is how perception can rationally constrain our beliefs if perception is a natural occurrence and beliefs are conceptually structured items. The problem of agency is how our bodily movements can be rationally constrained by our intentions if bodily movements are natural occurrences. McDowell identifies the root of the problem of perception as the assumption that all natural events must be explainable in purely natural scientific terms: Scientistic Naturalism. I argue that Scientistic Naturalism causes similar problem for our ability to make our bodily agency intelligible.

I argue that Scientistic Naturalism leads to a conception of bodily movements as essentially agency-neutral events and that such a conception is likely to obscure the intelligibility of bodily agency. If it is claimed that our motility can be made intelligible independently of any reference to an agent, then our conception of ourselves as bodily agents is undermined. As alternative I propose a dual conception of bodily movements, which takes the movements involved in bodily actions to be of a kind that can only be made intelligible if we regard them as the expression of rational agency. Once we allow for essentially agency-involving movements then we can also make sense of the idea of essentially movement-involving tryings. We can formulate the idea of such movement involving tryings in terms of a disjunctivism of trying: Any trying is either an idle trying or it is an essentially embodied trying. The combination of the idea of embodied tryings and the idea of bodily movements as essentially agency-involving I call embodied conceptualism concerning bodily agency. I call it embodied conceptualism because the idea of agency-involving movements is the idea of movements that are the expression of an agent's basic teleological capacities and such capacities are conceptual.

In the second part of the thesis I argue that McDowell's new conception of perceptual content as non-propositional yet conceptual content has significant advantages compared to propositional conceptualism. I call the new view embodied conceptualism concerning perception. I argue that embodied conceptualism can answer several challenges to conceptualism found in the early works of Merleau-Ponty. I further argue that Merleau-Ponty's own position possesses an inherent tension, which I identify as a new version of the oscillation between the Myth of Given and Coherentism. In the last part of the thesis I argue that Merleau-Ponty's argument in favour of non-conceptual motor intentionality contain an ambiguity that corresponds to the tension in his account of perception. I argue that embodied conceptualism can avoid the problems Merleau-Ponty diagnoses as the problems of Intellectualism and at the same time avoid the ambiguities that seem to be inherent in Merleau-Ponty's position.